



SCIENCE FICTION



GATEWAY

**R. A.
LAFFERTY
AURELIA**

AURELIA

R. A. Lafferty



www.sfgateway.com

Enter the SF Gateway ...

In the last years of the twentieth century (as Wells might have put it), Gollancz, Britain's oldest and most distinguished science fiction imprint, created the SF and Fantasy Masterworks series. Dedicated to re-publishing the English language's finest works of SF and Fantasy, most of which were languishing out of print at the time, they were – and remain – landmark lists, consummately fulfilling the original mission statement:

'SF MASTERWORKS is a library of the greatest SF ever written, chosen with the help of today's leading SF writers and editors. These books show that genuinely innovative SF is as exciting today as when it was first written.'

Now, as we move inexorably into the twenty-first century, we are delighted to be widening our remit even more. The realities of commercial publishing are such that vast troves of classic SF & Fantasy are almost certainly destined never again to see print. Until very recently, this meant that anyone interested in reading any of these books would have been confined to scouring second-hand bookshops. The advent of digital publishing has changed that paradigm for ever.

The technology now exists to enable us to make available, for the first time, the entire backlists of an incredibly wide range of classic and modern SF and fantasy authors. Our plan is, at its simplest, to use this technology to build on the success of the SF and Fantasy Masterworks series and to go even further.

Welcome to the new home of Science Fiction & Fantasy. Welcome to the most comprehensive electronic library of classic SFF titles ever assembled.

Welcome to the SF Gateway.

Contents

[Title Page](#)
[Gateway Introduction](#)
[Contents](#)

[Aurelia](#)

[Website](#)
[Also by R. A. Lafferty](#)
[About the Author](#)
[Copyright](#)

We'll scorch the skies and dip potluck
From Hound-Dog Hulk to Skokumchuck.

World Government Ballad

They carried on and sang that evening before they took off:

"We are the quanta, we are the wave,
We are the bravest of the brave."

They sang the ballad, but they weren't as brave as all that. They were scared.

Were they crows or were they people? They perched up on the spheres like crows. They sang like scared crows, and singing was supposed to be one of their accomplishments. They were having kick-off night together and giving a rousing send-off to their own adventures, but they were scared of it all. And yet, being scared wasn't a thing they could admit to themselves or to each other.

They were not only jittery but they were also a little bit ridiculous (it was planned that they should be), perched like big birds on the tops of their oblate spheres which in turn were balanced atop launching needles that stabbed into the night sky. What ungainly, roosting crows they were! It took all their ingenuity to appear beautiful, and they barely made it.

All of them were fourteen-year old children. In one hour, after they had embarked, they would all be fourteen year old men and women. This night marked a change in their lives. It was the ready-or-not adventure, and they could never be ready enough for it.

They had to trust to their schooling and to their competence. They had almost completed their tenth form courses. All that was left was the 'World Government' portion (on which they would embark within an hour), and then the composing of the tenth form thesis after they should return. Usually though, not all of them would return from such a flight and governing.

They were supposed to spend the hours before kick-off in prayer on their solitary launching needles. And they did pray, yes: but they used a free sort of corporate prayer. The launching needles that seven of them had selected and on which they had built their flight crafts were quite close together, within singing distance; even within conversation distance considering the expanded sort of operatic-*conversevole* voices, very carrying, that they had developed. Close friends should not be completely solitary on kick-off night. Other groups had been modifying their kick-off night prayers for several years. They had to proclaim themselves some way. Proclamation was prayer too.

"We are the kings of the coming years.
We are the young-blood pioneers."

So they sang in chorus from their respective launching needles. It was praying and vaunting and inventing all at the same time. The seven young people were inventing modes and guises and persons for themselves, mysterious person-fronts that they would use for only part of this one year. In a way, they were spouting and fledging wings for themselves, for only this double flight, a going-out and a return. This was the last time they would ever use even figurative wings. But they would always remember that *once* they had had wings, even if they had not been of a completely physical sort.

"Consider this as a purging of yourselves that, for convenience sake, comes at the time of your flights and governorships," one of their instructors had told them. "This is something to be got rid of and got over with. This will be the only—ugh!—romantic episode that any of you will ever be allowed. It is something to *have had* at the early turn of life. And it is something to put behind you when you are fully adult."

That was put pretty prosaically by the instructor, but to themselves they presented it more singingly. There were seven of them on their launching needles that night, four males and three females, and they shared one 'romantic episode' soul between them.

"But you have been kept very busy, very hour-filled, day-filled, night-filled busy," another of the instructors had said, "so that you have not been able to be precocious in all directions. You have developed towering loyalties and affections, but you have not yet become polarized. After your flights and your governorships, then your feelings may be polarized, but not yet. It is a question whether any world governor should ever have polarized feelings. They get in the way of pure intuition.

"Last year you had your first essays in marriage and reproduction, and yet that was all pretty basic. You learned and experienced by rote, but the realization and completion of these things are reserved for a future time. Next year, your feelings and attitudes will be more fulfilled. But it is not merely of the polarized aspects, coming on you when you are too young, that you must be wary.

"There are variant attitudes in all of you. That is the unnatural fact of the matter. There are unregulated and un-oriented thoughts in all of you. These must be removed from you without killing you in either mind or body. These thoughts and residues will fly away with you when you fly on your kick-off night voyages. But they will not return with you when you return. You will leave these behind you in the strange and uncouth places where you will travel and govern. All such flighty things (if I may so pun about the undesirable traits to be jettisoned) will be scattered and extinguished during your flights. By these flights, we sift you like wheat. Those of you who are too small and too unguine will fall through the sieve and will no longer be a part of the 'golden world cultus.' Whether you are alive or dead, you will be dead to your own world if you fall through the sieve."

Yes, the instructor was proved right. There were flighty things and notions and ideas, explosively flighty things, in all of them that night. But the instructor (he was one of the most gentle of them) had had a sort of afterthought at that time.

"Ah, perhaps you will not be quite dead to us even so. We know that there are those who do not come back, and yet live somewhere for many years. They form a sort of penumbra that is always partisan to the golden world. If you cannot be true 'Children of Light,' perhaps the next best is that you should be 'Children of the Penumbra.'"

Now Aurelia, the most awkward of the seven of them by far, was trying to declare herself. "It is with the utmost trepidation, but with total fealty to duty, and with a hunger for the high heroic, that—" Aurelia began to sing or speak in that operatic—*conversevole* voice that carried strongly to the various launching needles.

"Oh cut it out, Aurelia! Do not be stuffy," Rex boomed in his own strong *basso-parlante*.

"But I *will* be stuffy," Aurelia counterpointed. "I am stuffed full of things and feelings. I can feel the stirrings, not entirely physical, of the one-term wings on my shoulders. Aye, and my mouth is full of the feathers from them. Give me your loyalty, all of you. Give me your affection. I am the one of us who is the most lacking in everything. I am the one of us who needs support the most."

"None of us is lacking, nor can be!" Lavender said or sounded in her easy contralto. "It is not possible that any one of our species should ever be lacking in any way. Let us sing our fine arrogances:

"Swift to the dens of the lesser breeds!

We are the gardeners. They are the weeds."

That was the arrogance that they all gave voice to. With the 'people themselves,' such things were always lawful arrogance. Well, which of the lesser breeds could send their young people out on such flights and governorships? Not one, not one, except maybe the people of Delphinia, and they were very far away. And yet, Lavender was mistaken in her boast. They were all of them lacking in a hundred different ways. They had been deficient in their pupal and larval stages, and in all their growing up. They were deficient for any expectations that might be held for them. Really, it seemed that the time-table that had been set for them was too swift a one. And Aurelia was the most lacking and deficient of the seven-group, or of many seven-groups.

Well, in her own way at least, she was also the object of the most affection and the most loyalty. She had to be, or she'd never have made it even this far. But now, tonight, they would

be flying off singly, and the loyalties and affections of the others would accompany her only in the way that good wishes might accompany one.

Had Aurelia even constructed an adequate ship? It was frightening to have to ask a question like that. But Aurelia just wasn't as smart as the rest of them. Her life would be sailing with the ship that she had built, and no one else could aid her in its design or operation. But would a faulty ship mean the end of her life? For every sortie, there was usually the death of one or two of the seven; and it would take some hard remembering to come up with a farer as badly equipped as Aurelia. It would be hard to come up with one with more friends too. But, sadly, Aurelia was the most likely bet for destruction.

Whatever sort of deep-space ship she had constructed for herself, it couldn't be very good. Aurelia had always been weak on 'Space Ship Design.' And she had always been weak in navigation, so what sort of world would she likely arrive at anyhow? At her second or third choice world, maybe? For the little bit that she knew about worlds, one would have to shudder at what her second or third choice might be. None of the young persons could actually ask one another for help. But one could ask for information after the barn door was already burned, as the proverb has it.

"How will they know when one of us has come to govern a world?" Aurelia wailed in fluty frustration. "We are not allowed to announce to anyone that one of us has come to govern. How will they recognize one of us as having the power and right to rule them? And what can one of us do if they do not recognize me? I'm lost already, I'm lost."

"When a lion appears in the midst of a herd of hartebeests, the hartebeests will recognize the fact," Pandolfo sang from a near needle. "When a lighted candle is placed inside a hollowed-out pumpkin, the pumpkin will know it. You will be that candle wherever you go, Aurelia. You will be the light of that world. You will illuminate it even from its east unto its west. A lot of things you don't have, but you do have light, Aurelia."

"Want to bet?" Aurelia chanted sadly. "I couldn't illuminate even the legendary Kolokynthekephale, Pumpkin-Head World itself. If there is such a place, that's probably where I'll end up."

"Aurelia, don't you know what world you're going out to govern?" Adrian sang in amazement. "Haven't you recorded the navigation sets for your first and second and third choices?"

"Nah," Aurelia caroled. "It's all in that vile number code."

"Concatenated Calculi Modules, girl!" Patmo exploded in rough song. "You're fourteen years old! Don't you *understand* the 'Navigation and Selection Number Code?'"

"Not nearly as well as I'd like to," Aurelia voiced. "And my ship doesn't understand the subject much better than I do. You see, my ship isn't really very much smarter than I am, even though I tried to make it smarter. What if the people on the world I go to govern won't know that I am supposed to be superior? How will I ever convince them that I am?"

"That is quite a problem, Aurelia," Audry sang sweetly. "There has to be some way we can help you. We'll cheat, we'll lie, we'll slip you answers. We will do something."

Kick-off Nights are always nights of good weather, even if favorable weather must be borrowed from nights before and after. This was a perfect night.

"We are the bright, unruffled folk,
With buck-skin bellies and hearts of oak."

so the intrepid seven sang. Six of them were no longer nervous for themselves. Now they were nervous only for Aurelia. This was a good thing. It was bad when young persons were nervous for themselves on kick-off, and six of them were saved from that now.

"It isn't even fatal if you bear in on a world that is not one of your proper targets, Aurelia," Patmo called to her. "Every ship is programmed (you programmed your own ship to this, though you may not remember doing it since your own programming overrides your conscious thoughts and intentions) for seven alternate worlds if it misses its first world by faulty navigation. And it won't very much matter which one of them you come to. They will all be types of the one that you first agreed to go to; they will all need governing; and they will all fit the conditions of your assignment sufficiently. Confidence! That is what you need, girl, confidence!"

They all meditated and prayed. And they sang some more:

“Tougher we be than barbs and thorns!
We are the horniest of the horns!”

That is what they sang for their last vaunt verse, and then things began to happen to them. Like the crows that they so resembled in their perching on their high spheroids, they began to wake, one by one, to the scent and sound of dawn somewhere. They began to loosen their wings to take compulsive flight.

They were full of unbottled feelings, and they had better get out of there fast. Indeed, their ships were programmed (by themselves) to take flight when their exact trajectory-second arrived. They went into their ships. They seemed to melt into their oblate spheres, their spacecraft that they had made themselves. They took off smartly without unnecessary fire or fume.

Audry took flight. Then Rex. Then Adrian (his ship was heavily laden, for it would have an important and far flight.) Then Lavender and Patmo.

“Don’t forget to set your Compensating Contingency Grid just as you feel yourself going into the grasp of the flight, Aurelia,” Patmo called to her with his last song for that while. “You do forget things, you know, if you’re not reminded of them.”

“Oh, I’ll say so!” Aurelia confessed in shameful measures. “But it wouldn’t have mattered if I forgot to set my Compensating Contingency Grid at the last moment. What does matter is that I’ve forgotten even to make the grid. Oh, what a flight this is going to be!”

Pandolfo flew, the last of the others.

Then only Aurelia was left. She was very tense about it, and she shouldn’t have been. This was only a tenth grade school assignment such as every fourteen year old child must take. The worst that could happen to her was that she might fail the assignment. The commonest way of failing such an assignment was getting killed or vaporized in flight or in governorship. That caused one automatically to fail the course.

‘World Government,’ the going out to govern one of the minor worlds for a few equivalent months, was an important course. But all the courses were important.

Aurelia flew on sudden impulse. She had no way of knowing whether she flew at her proper moment, at her ‘exact trajectory-second or not. Another thing that she had forgotten to make was a Monitoring Chronometer.

"There isn't any way to make a bad flight," one of the instructors had said to them two days before their kick-off. "If there were such a way, then Aurelia would do it. But she won't. You have all constructed your flight ships on the basis of your multi-level intelligences, and there is no way at all that any of you could have really faulty intelligence. You belong to the 'Golden People,' and the 'Golden People' cannot fail in routine things, nor in special things. If it were possible for one of your to fail, Aurelia would be the one. But she will not fail. Too many people like her too much, and being liked provides one of the most powerful intellectual feed-backs known.

"All of you will always have more things go right than will go wrong, simply because you are the people you are. You will always have more reason than unreason. You will always have more logic than illogic. You will always have more luck than unluck. That is because you are of the special people.

"All your inventions and constructions will be special, and they will not fail. They will have built-in safeguards. Should one of you be rendered unconscious during your flight, it would not greatly matter. You will have constructed your ships so that they will follow the instructions of your unconscious if you are unconscious. And they will follow the instructions of your death-mind (one of the most improvising and inventive of all mind-stages) if you are dead. But it is unlikely that one of you should die on your outward flight. If any of you would do it, it would be Aurelia. But she won't.

"Of course all of you have made blunders and will make them. But you will not have made enough blunders to frustrate your design. If it were possible for one of you to make enough blunders to fault your flight, Aurelia would have done it. But she hasn't.

"And you will have completely forgotten some important things. After all, you are only fourteen years old and on your first world venturing. But you will not have forgotten any absolutely necessary thing. For instance, you will not have forgotten to make a 'Monitory Chronometer.' " (All but one of them laughed at the absurdity of anyone forgetting to make a 'Monitory Chronometer.') "If any of you could possibly have forgotten to make such a thing, it would have been Aurelia. And she hasn't."

Oh, but she had! She had forgotten, and she had absolutely resolved to do it when she had heard the instructor mention it. And (Oh, how could she have!) she had forgotten it again as soon as that session was over with.

And now (it was two equivalent days after the instructor had made that last speech to them) she was in strange skies without a 'Monitory Chronometer' of any sort. Such a Chronometer is an absolute necessity for navigation, and what will happen to you if you do not have it?

Aurelia had forgotten to make a 'Compensating Contingency Grid.' She had forgotten to make a 'Monitory Chronometer.' And she had forgotten to make a third important thing whose very nomenclature she had also forgotten.

Oh, lacking such a Chronometer, you might possibly still reach a world of the type selected for you. But as to which of the worlds of that type you would reach, it would be left up to random chance. And when you got there, you would not even know what world you had come down on. Oh, there are memorized ear-marks by which one might know what world it was. But Aurelia had not well memorized the ear-marks.

Aurelia might come down on Skokumchuck the Shelni Planet, or on Kleptis which is one of the Trader planets, or on Gaea which is called Telluris or the Earth by its natives. On Yellow Dog, or Bandicoot, or Sireneca (though that's pretty distant), or Hellpepper Planet, or Dobson's World, or Hokey Planet, or Aphthonica (World Abounding), or Horner's Corner, or Sad Dog Planet, or Lotophage, or Lamos, or Paravata, or Analos, or Gelotopolia, or Beggars' Choice, or Ragsdale, or New Shensi, or Groll's Planet, or any of fifty-five other deficient worlds that were within the primary dimension-sphere and had been judged in need of even a bit of second-class or immature governing. Some of these were popular names of worlds that

Aurelia didn't even know the chart name of. But she knew that there were seventy-six planets of the type recommended to her, of the type for which she had supposedly programmed her ship, of the type within primary range. But, with no 'Monitory Chronometer' at all, it was blindman's guess which one she should come down on.

And, in the meanwhile, she was on a very random flight, and random flights are rough. She bled from the nose and mouth and ears. She retched and reeled and swooned. "I'll be so woe-begone that everything will be sorry for me," she hoped, "and someone will take care of me. Yeah, the hydrogen atoms, and the nickel-iron meteorites, they will feel sorry for me, I bet!" There was nothing else out there. Aurelia, Aurelia, you had better have more luck than unluck now.

Three years before, when Aurelia had been eleven years old and in the seventh grade, she had built a living steed as a school assignment. She had built it a little bit like a patrushkoe-horse, since she didn't have a lot of imagination. But she didn't make it too much like a patrushkoe, since students were not allowed to mimic already existing species too closely with their creations. She left one thing out when she built that steed, the electronic-bit to guide it with. (Any eleven-year-old child is likely to forget one thing in making a complex animal like that: think of the hundred things that she remembered when she was making it!) But it was a good steed and a tireless one, and Aurelia enjoyed riding it.

But she didn't know where it was going, no more than it knew itself. Her contemporaries had made a lot of jokes about Aurelia and her steed that couldn't be guided.

Now her little space-ship, well-built in most respects, was another steed that couldn't be guided at all. But it was a tireless steed. They were in regions of 'good skies.' And it was a great thrill just to ride it. But it was a fearsome thrill.

"There is no fear of falling in space," and instructor has said. By the Great Blue Jasper, there is a fear of falling in space if you have forgotten the 'Gyroscopic Struts' and the 'Pseudo-Vertical Stabilizers.' There is a horror-sickness of falling.

But there was no way that Aurelia could avoid coming down on a world of her designated type. If everything else should go wrong, such a land-fall was still assured by the very style of the shining ship. The seventy-six planets of Aurelia's assigned type formed, as far as the ship was concerned, and integrated space-net. The programmed attractions for them were very strong. She could not fly out of that net without being captured by it and brought back. It was a huge net, yes, but her speed also was huge and transcending.

Lacking a 'Monitory Chronometer' to select the best world to match up with the talents of Aurelia, the ship would have to take one at random. All the net-planets would be liveable for Aurelia. And every one of them could well do with a little judicious and higher-type governing by one of the 'Shining People.' But otherwise than their all being liveable for her, they were not very much alike.

There would be outright horror waiting on Hell-Pepper Planet, and Aurelia was a person bothered by brazen horror. There would be a wildness that is worse than horror on Bandicoot. Any decent person will feel disgust for Hokey Planet. On Groll's Planet or on Gaea there was said to be a grossness that really amounted to an enormity of behavior. The dishonesty of the inhabitants of Kleptis or New Shansi was well known. So was the perversity of Yellow Dog. There was the juvenile clownishness on Gelotopolia and Ragsdale, an impudent artiness on Aphthonica, an insulting elegance on Dobson's World, an intolerable raunchiness on Horners' Corner. And there was the plain mystery of fifty or so worlds that had been analyzed only from a distance and had never been visited by either explorers or student governors. The only thing they all had in common was that they were insufficiently governed and could use whatever guidance they could get.

Aurelia had drawn her shoddy class of worlds because she didn't know what she wanted; and because her fellow students, knowing what they did want, had selected all the better groups while she hesitated. Even so, and considering her restricted list, it was not anticipated that she would land on any of the mystery worlds. Following type, though, none of them could be as mysterious as all that. But likewise it wasn't anticipated that Aurelia should have forgotten to make a 'Monitory Chronometer.'

A jolt, a stir, and the raising of hackles! Aurelia's space-ship made a move like a hound-dog taking a scent. Aurelia knew that the ship had selected a target, subject to her contradiction. What would she contradict it with? She hadn't any idea how to identify the target. Sure, there had been the flash cards that one looked at for one twentieth of a second, showing every

target against every background of stars. But who remembers all the flash cards now? Aurelia accepted the target, and her ship started down.

Aurelia considered such parts of her scrappy instructions as she could recall:

“The first instructions or admonitions are to remember that you are of the ‘Shining People’ and will not really need instructions. What you do will be, by definition, right. That is what it means to be one of the ‘Shining People.’ No one of the ‘Shining People’ can ever make a wrong choice, not when only lesser people are in the vicinity.

“The second admonition is to remember that you are only a half-formed child of the ‘Shining People’ and that you just possibly might make a wrong choice somehow, in a context that we cannot admit to the inferior people.

“And the third admonition is that you had better not make that wrong choice, possible or not, or you will not be coming back here, or indeed anywhere.”

Rough stuff to remember, that, for one suffering from the gravity flesh-crawl and the landing sickness. And then there was this bit surfacing in the memory:

“On landing, the first step is to achieve firm dominance over the world that you are to govern. All other steps will follow from this first step, and all other steps will be easy to the degree that you have achieved early dominance.”

The Instructor who had given these instructions had been only two years older than Aurelia and her bunch, so he was sixteen years old, a smart sixteen. But at least he had already completed his successful governorship of an alien world. He had completed that World Government Course, so he was entitled to instruct in it. A full adult might have forgotten some points that were important to the fourteen-year-olds who were going out.

There had been another bit:

“As to the purpose and goal of your governorship, it will be the same as the purpose and goal of yourself. If you don’t have it, you can’t give it. If you are aimless, so will your governorship and administration be aimless. But how could any person of the ‘Shining People’ ever be aimless?”

A little more to the immediate point had been the advice and reassurance:

“There isn’t any way that you can make a bad landing. No ship designed by one of the ‘Shining People’ could ever make a bad landing. And none of the ‘Shining People’ could permit it to happen.”

But that sixteen-year-old instructor hadn’t known Aurelia very well. What if one of the ‘Shining People’ suffered a dim-out? What if blind destruction rises up and gobbles one up completely? Coruscating Contignations! It’s all coming apart. Look out!

Aurelia made a bad landing.

There were horse-herders, two of them, in the countryside keeping a night-watch over their horses that night. There were half a hundred sectarians of millennial sort in a summer camp nearby. This was in a group of low mountains around a lake. There was also a multi-media (music and hollering and debauching) 'with-it' group in a community quite near that place. There was the River Boat on the lake with all-night gaming and music. There was a tycoon and his menage in a luxury cabin. There was a whole colony of luxury cabins on a fishful part of the mountain lakes.

There was, moreover, an escaped convict, probably dangerous and certainly insane, who had been sighted in the vicinity. And there were two young men with a "Joe's Tow Service" tow-truck who were wandering the tilty roads of the region of the false report of booty. So they were typical groups, typical persons inhabiting the land and water on a typical night.

They all heard the little space-ship, all horns blowing and all lights flashing, come down like a shouting and howling star. It crashed with an impact that was more noise than destruction (the ships of the young 'Shining People' were all sturdily made, and so were the young 'Shining People' themselves,) so many of the folks of the vicinity came towards the crash site, each at his own pace.

It was night, and it was in the region of delightful small mountains. The sound of Aurelia's arrival was like the blowing of all the trumpets of Heaven. Yeah, like all those trumpets blowing out of tune! One thing, seven things really, that Aurelia had installed in her space-ship was horns.

"I want everyone to hear me coming," she had said. "I want them all to be able to get out of my way."

That was ridiculous.

"Perhaps you might want to arrive secretly at first," the instructor had said several days ago, "and survey the situation to ascertain the easiest and quickest ways to secure domination over that world. Almost all of the most successful governors of worlds have arrived on them quietly and secretly."

"Quiet and secret after I bank down maybe I will be," Aurelia had said, "but first I want things to get out of my way."

"Things, animate and otherwise, will get out of the ways of any member of the 'Shining People,' always, and without even knowing that they do it," the instructor had explained. "That is the submission that nature and its flora and fauna and encumbrances and petrologies owe to the 'Shining People'—to get out of our way always."

"Well, I won't blow my horns till I'm scared," Aurelia had said.

"It would be impossible for any of the 'Shining People' to be—what was that word—"scared," the instructor had admonished. "It would be impossible for any adult of the 'Shining People' even to remember that there was such a word as 'scared.' And even a fourteen-year-old member of the 'Shining People' could hardly be scared of anything ever."

That instructor had been wrong. Aurelia was scared when she saw the mysterious planet, wrapped in craggy night, rushing up at her and showing no signs of owing any submission at all. She leaned heavily on all of those seven horns, the only instruments on her ship that seemed to have a clear purpose at the moment.

"People, catch those heavenly horns!" persons of the multi-media 'with-it' group cried and bawled to each other as they came out of skittish sleep. "Catch those third and fifth and seventh discords! People, we got to ride those discords wherever they are going!" These 'with-it' people knew their discords.

The horns roared and howled and hollered. And Aurelia's ship came down with something between an extreme jolt and a mild annihilation. The ship was damaged but not completely destroyed. The same went for Aurelia herself. But she came out of the craft nervously but bravely. Oh, what sort of nameless world would this be?

(At the same time, and probably not far from there, Aurelia's counterpart and adversary came

down like black lightning, secretly and yet arrogantly. More, perhaps, of Aurelia's counterpart and nemesis and adversary in a little while.)

There were acrid and acid clouds. This was a woolly sort of world, but which woolly world was it?

There was someone or something lurking there when Aurelia climbed out of her ship. It was a thing or person, dark and shuffling, that did *not* get out of Aurelia's way. It disputed her way rather. It attempted to attack her in a bizarre manner. The thoughts of that thing, as Aurelia was able to gather them, were relentless and at the same time incoherent. It was probably insane. Certainly it was so in appearance.

"Oh go wash yourself!" Aurelia said crossly. "You're filthy. And I hear water running there. Go and do it."

"Nah," the things said. "Not dodge me no more, kid. Come here."

"I do hope you're not typical of this world, though first specimens usually are typical," Aurelia said. "Really, your mind is so boggled that I could hardly call you rational."

"Nah," the thing said. "Get off the coy, kid. Come here."

And then the thing definitely assaulted Aurelia, a bad beginning on this planet, whichever one it was. Aurelia, almost automatically, took the counter-action that had been inculcated in her. But she was dismayed by the results.

The thing or person was twice her size and musky strong, but something was wrong with it. It was unable to take care of itself, and Aurelia apparently damaged it. She may even have killed it. And Aurelia was exasperated over the bad start.

How could people be put together so badly and be so ill-conditioned as to break or be damaged by a few counteraction strokes such as every nine-year-old child of the 'Shining People' uses?

Well, if the people of this world were so easily handled, Aurelia would have no real trouble in that particular. But she must be careful not to damage them unnecessarily.

Some of the sectarians of the millennial sort arrived at Aurelia's ship after her encounter with the dangerous escaped convict. The sectarians came from their cave even before the multimedia 'with-it' people arrived from theirs.

"Hail Messianic Angel, bright Vision from Heaven, and Governess of the World!" these non-shining sectarians greeted Aurelia. "Come with us to our place and protect us in these latter days, and let the rest of the world perish. You just destroyed a murderous lion of the night who was out on a prison break. You are invincible."

Now this was amazing. These odd people knew Aurelia. They understood who she was. And they greeted her in one of the 6A45D languages. Well, so had the murderous lion used such a language, Aurelia recalled. Why, that was fortunate for Aurelia. That was one of the most simple types of language to be found anywhere. The 6A45D was one of the dozen classes of languages that she had learned fairly well, when she had failed to learn a hundred more difficult types at all.

Why, she could come close enough to this particular variety of the type to fake it. If there were big gaps in her understanding or her expression, then her intuition would flow into those gaps and fill them up. After all, she was a completely intuitive person. She was one of the 'Shining People.' She would keep these creatures talking, and the understanding of their tongue would grow in her by the minute. Soon she would understand them perfectly.

"You *are* a shining angel, aren't you?" those millennial sectarians asked her.

"Oh yes, certainly. As you see, as you see," Aurelia agreed. She was full of intuition in the special form of telepathy, and she pitched onto easy communication with them very quickly. Well, maybe she was twice as slow about it as would be any other member of her old group. But twice as slow was still pretty quick in this case.

"And the devil, what will-you do about the devil?" they asked her. "He's landed too, you know. Will you confound him?"

"Confound him? Yes, I suppose so. I'll confound him," Aurelia said. What the devil was this devil they were talking about, assuming that she was understanding what these people were saying? The devils didn't come among the 'Shining People' very much, and Aurelia wasn't experienced with them.

"We are talking about the devil who landed about the same time that you landed," they explained what she hadn't asked them. "We mean the devil who came down in a flame of

darkness when you came down in a flame of light. He must be confounded.”

“Yes, we’ll confound him then. We’ll confound him,” Aurelia agreed.

Then the ‘with-it’ people were upon them.

“The horns, the horns! Can we blow the horns?” the people of the multi-media ‘with-it’ group whooped as they arrived with that hectic slow-speed that befuddled persons sometimes believe is speed indeed.

“No, you may not. I’m sorry,” Aurelia said. “The ship will kill anybody who tampers with the horns.” Aurelia didn’t know whether this was true or not. She had intended to fix it that way, but she was not sure whether she had.

“It’s worth it,” one of those ‘with-its’ said. “I’m half there already, and I won’t even know it when I go the rest of the way.” This person then began to make the horns of Aurelia’s ship holler and roar and trumpet. The ship did kill him then, but the person still continued to play the discordant horns. The person had become an instant ghost, a new ghost of a very slow and lazy instant. And, in truth, for him, the lines between the life and death states had already been eroded. But he did add strikingly original elements to the discords of the seven horns.

“Come to my luxury cabin at once,” the tycoon ordered as he arrived with part of his menage to the place were Aurelia was holding a sort of hillside court. “These peanut-pushers will not be able to make you a substantial offer. But I can offer you an open-minded agreement in a new series of growth enterprises.”

“I will not come to your cabin at once,” Aurelia spoke stubbornly, feeling a little mistrust, though the tycoon was obviously the only intelligent person there. She didn’t want to be taken too fast. She hadn’t found her bearings on this world yet, nor even found out which world it was.

But the sound-box shape of the particular 6A45D language that the people spoke in this place had communicated itself to Aurelia now, and she was speaking and understanding much better. Nevertheless, she still used illusion to communicate, both as to the words she comprehended without really hearing and as to those that she made understandable to the people without really speaking them.

“Aurelia, girl, have you ever done any rodeo announcing,” one of those horse-herders asked her as he cantered up. “We’re always supposed to be on the lookout for celebrities we might talk into it, and I bet you’d be a natural. You’re wholesome and horsey. And you being from off-earth, we can bill you as the Shining Angel who has had experience with those great rodeos in the sky. Being an angel would make you an added attraction.”

“But I’m not an angel really,” Aurelia explained. “I misunderstood the word at first. They’re a different species entirely. They’re bodiless, and, ah, they’re a little bit tedious too. No, I haven’t done any rodeo announcing. I don’t know quite what it is, but I am not turning it down. Let me consider it for a couple of days. I want to do as many different things as I can while I’m here.”

“The other one, the dark-star one who landed the same time you did, do you think that he’s ever done any rodeo announcing? We could bill him as a devil who has wrangled the hottest horses in hell. If we had both of you at the same time, we’d have a double added attraction.”

“No, I don’t know for sure who he is, but I’m pretty sure he isn’t a devil,” Aurelia said, “and I’m pretty sure that he hasn’t done any rodeo announcing. But I cannot give a firm commitment at this moment. Wait a couple of days.”

The two horse-herders were rodeo wranglers and hazers, former performers and announcers who were now overtaken by the beginnings of age, and they were travelling with cars and horse-trailers from last night’s rodeo to tonight’s. And they had stopped in this vicinity to allow their horses to loosen their legs in this mountain meadow in the cool night. They were more pleasant representatives of this world than some that Aurelia had made.

“Horse-wranglers,” Aurelia said, “you look straight, so tell me something straight. What world is this? Is this Sad-Dog planet?”

“Sis, with a line of talk like that, you’d be good, good,” they said in admiration. “We just got to get you for a rodeo announcer.”

“I have a contract here,” said one of the females of the ‘with-it’ people, “for the licensing and

manufacture and marketing of Aurelia dolls and designs and marionettes and animated cartoons, and for more than a hundred different Aurelia devices and premiums and tie-ins. If you will sign this contract here, we will all cover ourselves with immense wealth and prestige.”

“But this isn’t a contract that you have in your hand,” Aurelia explained to the ‘with-it’ female who seemed to be in a perpetual fuzzy state. “This is a large pandanus leaf that you have here. And the thing that you have given me to write on it with is not a pen or a stylus. It is a skewer or shish for spearing things and turning them over a fire to roast them.”

“Oh, I thought that this was a contract and a pen for you to sign it with,” the fuzzy-brained ‘with-it’ person said. “If I can find a real contract and a real pen, will you sign it then?”

“I don’t think so,” Aurelia said. “We will see, but I don’t think so.”

“Can you hit high C?” another female of the ‘with-it’ people asked.

Aurelia hit high C. She was really a very voicy girl—“and just alien-enough-looking to make a go of it,” one of the ‘with-it’ males said.

“That’s too clear,” the female ‘with-it’ said. “Can you sing it muddier?”

Aurelia sang it muddier. So liked to sing, and she would try to do it in the local way.

“We may as well pull it in, Angel,” said one of the young men with the ‘Joe’s Tow Service’ truck there. “We won’t promise that it can be fixed, but if anybody can fix it then ‘Joe’s Repair Service’ can fix it. It isn’t the kind of space-ship that you see around here every day, so it won’t be safe to leave it here in the mountain meadow. It’ll be stripped by kids and vultures, and then you will never get away from here in it. Let us take it in and get it under cover. If we can’t fix it, we will tell you so, and you won’t owe us for anything except the estimate. And if we can’t fix it, we can probably give you top price for the hull. ‘Joe’s Salvage Service’ pays top price for every sort of hull.”

“Go ahead and take it in,” Aurelia said, “and get them to work on it. I won’t want it today or tomorrow, but if things go wrong here I may want it pretty quick after that. Price is no object, not to me anyhow. That’s not my department.”

“We’d better tie onto it and put a claim flag on it,” the tow-man said. “And we’ll radio for another and heavier truck to come and help us with the tow. I wonder what misguided genius designed this thing anyhow?”

“You won’t need to radio for a heavier truck,” Aurelia said. “See this string that I tie onto it. Just lead it by this string and it will follow. Cluck your tongue at it if it holds back. Oh, I designed it. There’s a lot of things wrong with it, aren’t there?”

“I believe that this is one of those worlds made up entirely of atypical sectors,” Aurelia lectured herself then. She tried to remember which and how many of the worlds of her sort were atypical worlds, but the information refused to come forward when she reached for it.

“Eminent Aurelia,” one of the millennial sectarians said, “now that you are here, will you make all things new? If we start our big millennial service today, will you be our feature speaker and healer?”

“I don’t know. I’ll try to,” Aurelia said. “I don’t seem to be arranging things very well. Where is that music coming from?”

“That’s the River Boat on the Lake,” one of the tow-truck men said. “Actually, it is named the ‘River Boat Queen.’ If you’ve got the talent, they’ve got the games. And the stakes are high. You’re antagonist is already there, and he’s winning. You can see the black flag flying by the boat lights. That means that they’ve got a ringer there and he’s ringering them. The boat is really the only lively thing this time of night out in these mountains.”

“We’ve got getter games and better stakes at my luxury cabin,” the tycoon said. “Come along with me. These people are all amateurs. The big deals aren’t here in the middle of this horse pasture or mountain meadow. Come along, girl.”

“No. I won’t go with you to your luxury cabin now,” Aurelia said. “Maybe later tonight or tomorrow I will.”

"Who is he anyhow?" Aurelia asked a certain young man who had arrived. She was referring to the tycoon with the menage and the luxury cabin.

"He is one of the Magi, the first one to appear, and he wants to contribute to your manifestation," the young man said. "His gifts are genuine and his motives are pure, though they were not always so. He wants to manifest you and protect you at the same time. He really is a wise man from the east. He really did see your lightning some days before it happened, and he came here to wait, and he obtained a luxury cabin. He loves to give gifts and potlatches. He works fast. Wait a bit though, sis. There will be others."

"Others what?"

"Other Magi. There are either three or six or nine or twelve of them. They will all be here for your epiphany. That will be quite soon. Don't deal with any of them till you see the gifts of all of them. And now I wonder if you will go with Susan Pishcala here into the broadcasting van so she can examine you?"

"Why should she examine me?" Aurelia asked, "I examine. I am not to be examined."

"She must examine you to see if you are indeed the Governess of the World, the manifestation that we have had advance reports on. The Governess, when she comes, is to have certain cabalistic marks on her by which she is to be known."

"Yes, that's so," said one of the Millennial Sectarian girls. "We want to see them too. It's all down in our Holy writ. Even an angel must be put to the test."

"I am not an angel, and I will not be tested," Aurelia said. "Ah, just what are these marks that I'm supposed to have, and how could you know about them?"

"They are a series of birth-marks," said a certain young man. His name was Jimmy Candor. "Ah, well, they are semi-cosmic, I suppose. And perhaps they are crude in their symbolism, as is all the mythology about the 'Governess.' There is also a series of Governess jokes that are pretty raunchy, and the Governess comic strip is conventionally vile. But you will not be able to escape either the test or the jokes or your comic-strip image either."

"No, no, the image is of someone else," Aurelia said. "I have come here by random accident, and I could not be known here. Yes, I *will* escape the tests and the jokes and the image. I will refuse them."

"Then there will always be doubt whether you are the true 'Governess of the World' or an impostor," Jimmy said. "We have a series of questions to ask you. Will you answer?"

"No, I won't," Aurelia said. "I have one question to ask. And will you answer?"

"Certainly," Jimmy Candor said, and Susan Pishcala seemed to agree. "We answer all questions candidly, as all genuine persons do, as all impostors do not do."

"What world is this?" Aurelia asked.

"It is a world where an impostor is going to find a hard go of it," Susan Pishcala answered for both of them. Yes, and she answered for all genuine people. And the two of those news people turned away and left Aurelia and drove away in their news-van.

"I hardly know what to say," Aurelia mumbled to the world at large. "What if I *am* an impostor?"

"Come with us then," said a large young lady. "We are all impostors in our set. We are masked people. We are the floating world. Come float with us. Your *Little Girl Lost* look is very well done, you know. Come to the River Boat. There's always good game going on there."

"I thought that was a lake and not a river," Aurelia said.

"The River Boat goes where it will, on Sea or Lake or Sewer. I like your other look too, Aurelia Angel, your double look, you know, your 'Take me to your leader' look with your own double take of it 'Hell, I *am* your leader.' It's neat the way you do it."

"I like it too," Aurelia said. "Please tell me something. Is this world Skokumchuck? Is it Bandicoot? Is it Hockey Planet? Is it Gaea? Is it Yellow Dog? Is it Horners' Corner, or Hellpepper Planet? Which is it?"

"Karl Talion is working on a continuing essay named 'The Nine Thousand Names of the World,' the big lady said. "He will love you for supplying him with such good names."

Aurelia was having trouble making ordered sense out of the surface of this world, and out

of the surface-creatures of this world that she was supposed to govern. But somehow she went onto the River Boat with the big young lady.

Then, a minimum of moments having gone by, they were (a table-full of them) playing cards on the River Boat. The card game they were playing was 'brag,' and a man named Blaise Genet had been winning the hand. But he was winning temporarily, difficultly, and with every sort of doubt. He sat next to Aurelia, and he once put his hand under her chin and turned her face to him. He looked into her eyes. He saw his own face and person, large and complete, and in more than full detail. He could see everyone else in the gambling salon in full detail also, and all the furnishings of the place. "You are a kaleidoscope, but you aren't real," he said.

"We used to play 'River Carnival.' We used to pay 'Masques.'" Aurelia said.

"We are playing those games now," the large girl named Helen told her.

"Did you ever consider going into the looking-glass business, Aurelia," that Blaise Genet said. "I never saw such fidelity of reflections."

Blaise had also seen in the pool of Aurelia's eyes that he *had* to win this hand of cards. He was already beyond his limit, and his life was on the line. Karl Talion, the huge man who played with them and dominated the play, had set a dagger-knife on the table to remind Blaise and any others of them that their lives were on the line. "And you say that I'm not real," Aurelia chided Blaise Genet.

Blaise, who seemed to be having an identity crisis about both himself and the world, had a crawling apprehension that the River Boat might be a real world after all. He was trapped, trapped, and he would need to break out of the trap. (Aurelia understood this apprehension of Blaise better than she did his words. It was more elemental.)

There was an expensive shabbiness about the whole thing, about the man Blaise himself, about Julio Cordovan, the man with a thousand faces, who was one of the party at the table, about Helen Staircase who was the largest living cheesecake doll in the world (she said that her name meant 'strong cheese' in German), about the tall and powerful Karl Talion who always seemed to be wearing a clean-shaven and pleasant mask. Only Aurelia did not seem expensive (she was priceless rather), or shabby (her simple shininess was not shabby). But there was even an expensive shabbiness about the cards they were playing with. What was it?

Oh, the cards, they were not unique. They were arty and clever, but they were machine duplicated. Somewhere there were other packs of cards identical to them, a sordid thought. And somewhere there were other machine-duplicated persons identical to Blaise Genet and to all the others. Except Aurelia.

There was one other man at the table, playing cards, and yet not playing with the others. This was the very old man, Michael Strogoff, who was blind and who played by himself with blank cards.

There were ten thousand vivid details in that big gaming room, and nine thousand of them were machine duplicated. But how could Blaise see so many and such vivid details in the reflecting pools of Aurelia's eyes? He returned to look in them again and again. Some attention should be paid to those thousands of vivid details. And some attention should be paid to the suave, angry, big man Karl Talion who had several times banged the knife into the gaming table, and picked it up, and banged it down again.

"If you are in too deep, Blaise," he said heavily, "if you are in so deep that you cannot pay at the end of this hand, then I will open you up with my knife here and I will kill you. That is the end of you. I see now that you cannot win this hand. Even if you win everything on this table, it still will not be enough for you to pay off at the end of this hand. So you must die. Make up your mind to die, Blaise boy, and make up your mind that you will not sniffle and carry on about it."

"I have one card still to draw," Blaise said.

"What is the matter with all of you?" Aurelia asked. "You don't act quite like people."

"Oh, we're spaced out," Helen Staircase said. "We are irrational elements."

"But this is so childish," Aurelia said. "We get spaced out one day in fourth grade class, and we plump all the pleasure out of it. And then we leave it behind us as the childish thing that it is."

"If I were governing a world," Helen grinned, "I'd do something about it."

"There is no card that you can draw that will save your life or your soul," big Karl Talion told Blaise Genet. "You *did* understand that you were betting both of them, did you not?"

"There is one card I can draw that will save me," Blaise insisted, "and it comes down that

it is one of the three cards left. And it's four quarts of your blood to be drained off if I draw right. You did understand that we bet four quarts of blood along with all else, didn't you?"

"I can bleed four quarts and still live," Karl Talion said. "You can't, Blaise. That much blood is the death of a boy, but not always of a man."

The jams one can get into playing 'brag' on a River Boat at night! But 'brag' is a game with a lot of death-banter in it. Sometimes the cards come up death, and sometimes they come up banter only.

Blaise Genet drew and showed his last card. The huge Karl Talion grasped his knife from the gaming table and crashed it with terrifying force into the rib cage of Blaise. And Blaise groaned and fell back. It was then seen, however, that Talion had reversed the knife with it, and it was not the blade but the hilt of it that had been hammered with such force against Blaise.

Blaise Genet, in hot pain from his cracked ribs and in a pleasant fury over winning the hand from that large and dangerous man, Karl Talion, reversed the knife and began to open the throat of Karl Talion with its blade.

"Wait, wait!" called a servitor in that gambling salon. "Everything must be done in order here." The servitor had a large hank of slippery elm in one hand, and in the other he had a small device called a runnel that will channel blood from a cut throat into a flask.

The servitor took the knife from Blaise, cut a strip from the hank of slippery elm, put the strip into his mouth and began to chew it. Then he gave the knife back to Blaise and held the runnel to the side of the throat of Karl Talion. A second servitor brought four crystal flasks of the one quart size.

Blaise was cutting Karl Talion in the side of the throat with the knife. He didn't cut him cleanly, and he didn't intend to. He ground the blade in, and even the mask-face of Karl was contorted in agony. Blaise and the servitors began to fill the flasks with Karl's blood. They filled the four flasks almost exactly full. The mask of Karl Talion (and it was a mask) paled and went ashen and haggard when the four quarts of blood were finally drawn from him. Then it was done with.

"Can blood be had from a paper doll?" Aurelia asked. "I wouldn't have believed it."

(A terrible knocking and clattering began of such intensity as to shake the whole world, and Blaise was amazed at the self-control of all the other persons who did not allow themselves to be disturbed by the racket. Even Aurelia, who did not know what the noise was, had still been expecting it and was not at all startled by it. She knew that it was an attribute of Blaise Genet.)

The first servitor took the slippery elm quid from his mouth and rubbed it on the throat of Karl Talion to staunch the bleeding. It did so, but that big man was tottering on the edge of death. The slippery elm quid is the *ptelea* of the ancients, and it will staunch any bleeding.

The terrible knocking grew louder and louder, and Blaise rushed out of the gambling salon to get away from it. But it was everywhere. Was it real? It was as real as anything else, and more real than most of the things. There was a real basis for everything that happened here.

But sometimes it seemed that the terrible knocking was a private affliction of Blaise Genet. It was a loud knocking at the door or at the window. It was a determined knocking that wanted an answer. Somebody wanted to come in, or at least to communicate.

This terrible knocking had come to Blaise's door and to his window night after night, and there was never anyone visible there. It was all around his workshop every day, and no one was ever seen there either. Blaise fled from it regularly.

He went to hotels to stay, and the knocking was always at his rooms there. He took a bus trip: the knocking was there, on the outside of his bus window all night, and there was nothing outside except darkness, and sometimes illuminated landscapes and cityscapes. He took a train trip. It was the same. It was a knocking at his window, day and night, loud to him, not heard or barely heard by other people. He took a plane trip and it was the same. Someone was knocking on the outside in the cold, thin air. He spent an entire year's savings in taking a twelve-minute orbit of the earth. It was the same. Someone was knocking on the outside of the hull of the orbit ship and wanting to get in.

"Oh, sure," the assistant pilot had said to him. "It happens sometimes, every eighth or tenth trip. It means that we have a split-wit on board. The split-wit is you in this case. I will have to put it in the log that we have a split-wit on this trip."

It was really a knocking on the outside of Blaise's head and his breast.

"Who's there? What do you want?" he would ask sometimes.

"I want to come in," the voice often said, and it was very like Blaise's own voice. "You have a whole lodging to yourself. That is not allowed. I will come in and share it with you. And, later, others will come in also."

But the lodging that the voice was talking about, the lodging that Blaise seemed to occupy by himself illegally, that was Blaise's own body.

"Why don't you answer it, Blaise," Aurelia said now. "It is either a person or an aspect trying to be born. Allow it to be."

"I try. I don't know how," Blaise said. Now he was full of a sort of reckless generosity, full also of the fear of coming under the further dominance of Karl Talion if he drank too much of his blood. So he gave each of the other gamers, Julio Cordovan, Aurelia the Governess, Helen Staircase, one of the quarts of blood.

"To go," said Julio Cordovan the man with a thousand faces. "I'll take mine with me to drink on deck." And one of the servitors capped the flask for him.

"To go," said Aurelia, and they capped a flask of blood for her.

"If you drink it, it will tarnish your wings, Aurelia," Helen Staircase said.

"No, I don't have wings in a physical sense," Aurelia answered. "But I have not met this custom before. Which world is this, Lamos, to have such a custom?"

"To go," Blaise Genet himself said, and they capped a quart of blood for him.

"We used to play 'Poles.' We used to play 'Symbols,'" Aurelia said thoughtfully.

"That's what we're playing now," Helen Staircase said. "Oh, I think I'll drink mine here." And she took it uncapped.

"Brag isn't really 'brag' on this world," Aurelia said. "It can be bought off. The four quarts of blood are a buy-off."

"How rough do you play on your world, Aurelia?" Helen Staircase asked her. "Your antagonist boasts that he will drink your blood. Do you know what is to be known about your dark antagonist?"

"You made that up, Helen," Aurelia charged. "He didn't say that. I will have to find out more about my dark antagonist. Or perhaps I will try to find out less about him. I will shut out all information about him. I will not allow him the run of a world that I govern."

This was the blood of Karl Talion that they were treating this way, drinking it off as if it were a commercial drink. Aurelia went to the condiment bar and shook salt and sulphur into it from the ornate shakers there. It wasn't a bad drink, strong and filling, sharp and reminiscent of some heroic sequence, tasting like iron—what was the word for the iron taste? Ironic, yes.

And Karl himself looked as if it were a case of life or death for him. The mask he was wearing was completely broken up in agony gashes and weariness lines. And yet it was genuinely a mask, and one could see that it fitted his face imperfectly, leaving gaps. Was there some new technology in this living mask, or was it simply an illusion gotten out of hand?

"They play rough on this world I am to govern," Aurelia said. "But why? Are these people no more than big-grown children over-age in grade? Or are they archetypes of some torturous passion set here at the beginning for my instruction? Or is there a difference? How would one of our smart kids go about analyzing this?"

"Aphthonica is a world of passionate archetypes who are at the same time big-grown children. I remember that much about Aphthonica, but it isn't enough. Aphthonica and two other worlds are so. Crewman, is Aphthonica the name of the world we are on?"

"I have heard it called many things, lady, but I have not heard it called that," the Crewman on the River Boat said.

Aurelia felt whole nations of strength singing in her blood. This is the strength that always comes to the 'Shining People' when they need it. "And sometimes it comes when they do not need it or want it at all," Aurelia told herself impishly.

It was the cluster of strengths that could permit her to dominate this world and govern it. It would allow her to impose herself on it, to savage it if it needed doing.

"Somehow I don't want to impose on it right now," Aurelia told her blood-singing self. "It's like a crooked story, it's like a crooked song, it's like a crooked ever-blooming happening. I want to watch it, I want to taste it, I want to hear it. Somehow I don't want to dominate it, not right now."

Aurelia's dark antagonist, her nemesis, her counterpart was there also. It or he looked as if it would speak. Aurelia felt as if she herself should speak, intricately and perhaps resoundingly. But these two ("—whoever he is, whoever I am," Aurelia said) did not have any governorship over each other. Then the moment passed and the antagonist shuffled off like shabby lightning.

There was a cry "Hands to the trolling lines!" All of them went to lend a hand to bring in the fish with the troll nets. And they brought in great draughts of them. Every person there was very strong on the ropes, even Aurelia who appeared slight. But what were these fish? Were they gar, were they bass, were they carp, were they what are called catfish on many of the worlds? (Lake fish are very similar on many different worlds; they are similar when everything else is different; nobody understands this, unless it has been explained quite lately.)

"Is Gelotopolia the name of the world we are on?" Aurelia asked a man who pulled on ropes next to hers. "From the speckled fish, I mean. You know the byword 'By the speckled fish of Gelotopolia.'"

"No, of course this isn't Gelotopolia," the man said. "What a question! Oh, you're joking. Oh, you're Aurelia the apparition. Believe us, lady, we are very glad to have you among us. You are a special gift and an extra joy."

How did everyone know Aurelia by name? She hadn't told anybody who she was. She had moved quietly and like a shadow, and she had spoken hardly at all. It was one of her singing powers that proclaimed who she was.

The fish were all taken in, and fish-hands among the crewmen took care of them. Most of the people ate of the trolled fish then. Some of them had them raw, and later some of them dined on them cooked. These indestructible fish were what the people of the 'floating world' lived on mostly, whatever else they seemed to use.

"I did not understand the hand when we were playing cards," Aurelia said to the big-grown girl or lady. "We learned 'Death-Play at Cards' at school, but it was rather different. Would Blaise have been killed if he hadn't turned up the right card? Would Karl have died if they had been playing for five quarts of blood rather than four?"

"Yes. Both would have died in these cases," said that large and buxom beauty, Helen Staircase. "But the people in the 'floating world' are a little bit like the heroes of Valhalla. We may die every day or, more usually, every night. But later, we are often able to scrub our deaths and destructions and to go again. This is partly, I think, because we live on the indestructible fish."

"But who are you people on the floating world?" Aurelia asked, "and of what world is this a part?"

"Oh, we are the people placed here to confound you," Helen said. "Do we need a better reason for being here? We are the people of the swamps and rivers and lakes, and they're out of fashion. Mostly we are the people of the forgotten river-banks and the little scrub rivers. We have extraterritoriality, we know. We don't count in the count of the land people. We are the trolls who live under the bridges, and that's who we are. And we troll fish to live."

"Are you a separate species from the other people of this world?" Aurelia asked.

"Oh no. We're just more trollish. It's always been this way. Lots of people have one foot in the floating world. Your tycoon, for instance, who will move you into his luxury cabin with his menage; he belongs a little bit to the floating world. He talks to fish."

"Oh," said Aurelia. "Do they answer?"

"They'd better," Helen said. "Ordinarily a casual traveller to this world would have met a thousand different sorts of people before he met us. Your ship or your programming wanted you to meet misfits early. And we do have pieces of the power. There is a sort of power struggle going on. It is all very symbolic. There is no need for you to take it for reality."

"You are saying that this isn't real?" Aurelia asked.

"Oh, no, no. It is real. Yes, of course. I am saying that there is no need for you to take it for real. That's a different thing entirely. If you take it for real you may be upset, and we don't want that to happen."

Three men assaulted Aurelia suddenly and tried to throw her off the River Boat and into the churning water. Aurelia took quick reprisal and counteraction, and Helen was also involved. One of the men himself went into the churning water and was drowned. One of them lay on the deck in a broken posture. And one of them ran away.

"I wish they wouldn't do things like that," said Helen who was breathing hard. "They will give you a bad idea of all of us. I believe that your dark antagonist is putting them up to this. Do you know who or what he is?"

"No. No, I don't. But I'm sure he's not in this."

A little bit later and Blaise Genet (the young man who was made nervous by the constant knocking at doors and windows), Julio Cordovan (the man with the thousand faces), Karl Talion (the man with the pleasant mask that was now scarred and tired, the man who perhaps had no face at all), Helen Staircase (the biggest cheesecake doll in the world), and Aurelia herself were playing cards again, playing Crooked-Neck Cribbage this time.

The old blind man, Michael Strogoff, was also playing cards, by himself, at the same table. To his blank cards he had now added one value-card. It was a multi-coloured Aurelia card. It was equal to the ace of trumps, to the ace of trumpets as they once called it correctly.

Aurelia was stung as by a needle.

And the effect of it made the whole world jump, and it disoriented her considerably. She looked around, and she could not guess who had done it. There were several personages in the gambling salon at this time. Some of them were playing 'Damnation Roulette' at which fortunes are sometimes made, but never lost. Herr Boch was there. Somewhere, Herr Boch ran the *Antikenladen*, also called the House of Mirrors and the Magic Store. At one time, Herr Boch had been horned, and there are still existing photographs showing him that way. This had been when he was quite a young man, and young men are sensitive when they acquire an abnormality of that sort. After a year of wearing them, the horns had fallen off Herr Boch and he had not been bothered by them anymore, except in recurrent dreams.

(Aurelia had a special mental gift for the time of her journey. She would see things as they really were. She would not see them as they seemed to be. This is a requisite for rational governorship. "I am sure it would be more restful if I saw all this as it seems and not as it is," she mumbled. "There is just no way of fitting true appearance in, and they are most unhandy

when no one else sees them.”)

There was the Prince of Nysa at the table with Herr Boch. And there was the now half-familiar tycoon who had just come in, apparently with something specific on his mind.

“We used to play ‘Charades’ a lot,” Aurelia said in an inconsequential way.

“That’s what we are all playing now,” Helen Staircase told her. And then the stinging needle had taken sad effect on ‘Shining Person’ Aurelia. There was one other thing she had forgotten, and it is dangerous to forget all that many things. She had forgotten to pray the prayer before she had left ‘Shining World’—“From the effect of alien needles and other strange intrusions, deliver me on my journey.” Well, she had remembered to say more than fifty of the short prayers, and had forgotten this one. Wouldn’t you know it that she would be wounded by this one chink in her defences!

She rose reeling, and she was away from there. She crashed against things. Then Aurelia was no longer near the card tables. She was standing in the cool outdoors of the bucking lake. She was leaning her head against some sort of cabin or passenger suite that was raised one desk higher than the surroundings on the River Boat. She was whiffy, from the blood drink, or from the popular narcotic-of-the-week on the River Boat, or from the needle. She wiped her stele clean of all immediate memories and started over fresh.

“My name is Aurelia, and I’m facing north,” she said resolutely, “and with that much data I should be able to figure anything out.”

“Mixed-up girl, you are *not* facing north,” said a man with a varied display of faces. In fact, he was known as ‘the man of the thousand faces.’ Aurelia would have remembered him if she hadn’t just wiped her stele clean.

“Little Miss Mix-Up is right in a way,” said a large and beautiful woman. “The direction she is facing is adjudically Earth-North. If she were on Earth, she would be facing north. She also had her name approximately right.”

“Which Earth is it that I am not on?” Aurelia asked with a fuzzy tongue. “Natives call almost every world ‘Earth.’ What world am I on then?”

“You are on the ‘River Boat,’ ” said a very large man with a mask. “See, you are holding a ticket in your hand. It says ‘One Paid Passage on the River Boat.’ This is where you are, so there is no reason for you to be mixed up.”

“A man shot me in the arm with a needle,” Aurelia said, “or else he is going to do it in a minute. For safety factor, I sometimes apperceive into the future several minutes. The shot has addled my wits and confused me.” Aurelia seemed to know these people slightly, but she did have valid reasons to be mixed up.

“Shot up? How?” asked the man with the thousand faces. “Like this?”

“Ouch, yes, just like that,” Aurelia said. “In the arm. It was presumptive of him, and of you.”

“It certainly was,” said the large and beautiful lady. “You mean that he shot you like this?” And the lady had a medical needle of her own, and she shot Aurelia in the midriff with it. “That will get your directions right. You have to have them right when we really shoot you.”

“Oh stop that!” Aurelia protested. “What do you mean ‘when we really shoot you?’ ”

“When we shoot you transitively as an arrow, not when we shoot you as a target. When we shoot you *at* something, then we don’t want to miss with you.”

“Be careful, Aurelia,” someone said. “These foreigners want to abduct you to their own countries.”

“Just let me—ah—” said someone else, and he shot Aurelia in the left thigh with a more than ordinarily sophisticated needle. “Ah, mine will have effect, and it will kill the effect of the others,” the man said. He looked mighty like a tycoon.

“Oh stop that, stop it!” Aurelia howled. “You have no reason to do that.”

“But I have a reason,” said a very large man, and he shot Aurelia in the right round with an executive-sized needle. “I have a good reason for this. I do hope that it straightens you out. If I am going to shoot you for an arrow, at least you must be a straight arrow.”

“But I don’t want to be an arrow at all,” Aurelia objected to the idea.

“It’s a little too late to change the plans now,” the large lady said. “But be as good an arrow as you can be. And after you die you may come back as a replica or a statuette.” This lady was grinning. Contingent people of her sort have humour?

Then the mysterious people left Aurelia, or she left them. But there was some lurking going on. Aurelia hoped there wasn’t any hard feelings. She was almost certain that some of

the needle people had been Karl Talion and Julio Cordovan and Blaise Genet and Helen Staircase; and maybe Herr Boch or the Prince of Nysa, and almost certainly the original tycoon. Aurelia was a little bit miserable with the dull confusion of her wits and the sharp stinging of arm and midriff and thigh and round.

But not for long. Pleasure and euphoria welled up in her. One, at least, of those needles had carried a joy jolt, and it lifted her up.

"What world are we on?" she asked a boat's official there. "I'm not unhappy or frightened now. The shots took care of that. But I still wonder what world I'm on."

"Not on any world," the boat's officer said. "No, we're on water. Watch it slide under us! One of the morning papers says that you're an impostor. It's that Jimmy Candor who says that you're an impostor and not a real governess at all. I think he's wrong. Watch the water slide under us! We're on the water, not on the world."

"Can't we be on the water on the world?"

"Not really," the officer said. "Rest your mind here. You have travelled too far. We're on the water only till we tie up to land. Be at peace."

"But, dammit, what world will it be when we come to land?" Aurelia demanded.

"Oh, didn't they give you a route-table when you got your ticket? That shows where you will be at every stop-over."

"It is time that I established my suzerainty over this blinking world!" Aurelia declared with sudden heat. "I will govern it, and I will not be pushed around."

"Come along then," said the tycoon. "At my place you can govern. Here you cannot. The international people wanted to abduct you, each to his own land. Well, I want to abduct you to my own, and my own land is wherever I happened to be. The important people will all come to my house, and with them you can deal. Come with me to my luxury cabin."

"All right," Aurelia said. "Your needle was the only one that knew what it was talking about. I'll go with you."

It was morning when Aurelia arrived with the tycoon at the luxury cabin, so there were the morning papers of all the great cities of the world on a sideboard there.

"Now, I think we will—" the tycoon began.

Well, newspapers of whatever kind are a certain simplicity, and Aurelia could assimilate great globs of them simultaneously and easily. She assimilated this glob from the Kansas City Star:

"Just after midnight of April Fool's Day there appeared the April Fool's story of the year. Well, it has always been a good story, and it always appears on April Fool's Day, every five or six years. This is the one of the arrival of a governor (in this case a governess) from a 'Shining World' to rule our Earth, secretly but powerfully, for the period of a year. There is a refinement this time, in that a 'Dark Counterpart' is also supposed to have arrived at the same time. For people who believe in the Single Tax, Astrology, Flying Stogies, the Democratic Party, Salt-Free Diets, Cheiromancy, and Trade Unionism, there might be validity here. For the less credulous, there is none. There must be many people in on this hoax, for it has circumscribed the world in a few hours, and it is well detailed. There is even agreement on the landing place of the 'Shining Person.' There is something else; an escaped convict, confused in his mind and needing hospitalization, has been found, murdered at the 'landing site.' This part has been verified. Is this not carrying an April Fool joke too far? We ask for a non-fooling-around investigation of the murder and the attempt to cover it up with out-of-this-world blather."

Then the New Shansi Old Journal gave the following:

"We must all be of better appearance and behavior, now that Aurelia is among us. Do we believe in Aurelia? We believe in the 'Shining People Tangency' whether the principal of it is named Aurelia or not. Something splendid has touched us! Let us reflect a little bit of that splendour in our own conduct. We have been cynics for too long. Let us not be jealous of shining civilizations that are perhaps better than our own. Let us be better than we are, and worry not that someone may be better than ourselves. We recommend that you read thoughtfully the news account on page A-2 and the editorial on page E-1."

Well, Aurelia found her own name mentioned in all the papers. It was not always headlined, but it was pinpointed in all of them. She was known by them all; she was accepted by many of them; she was even understood by a few.

But Aurelia had just arrived during the night barely past. How was she known world-wide so quickly? Well, whatever world this was, it was one of the rapid-media worlds. Aurelia tried to remember which and how many of the worlds of her sort and selection were rapid-media worlds, but that unremembered information simply slipped away from her mind-grapplers.

The Prairie Dog Town Prolocutor, the largest circulation daily in the world, had this to say:

"The irony is that it is a slightly retarded 'Child from the Stars' who has reached us this time. Using very sophisticated tele-scan, we have measured the abilities and intelligence of the 'Aurelia' entity. Yes, perhaps she belongs to the 'Shining People,' in type more than in intensity, but she would not rank among the 'Shining People.' This is evidence that there is a clear over-lap between 'Shining People' Intelligence (verified as to fact, though still unlocated as to source) and 'Earth People' Intelligence. This lets us go so far as to say that our latest 'sophisticated tele-scan' device would compare favourably with 'Shining People' devices. We have further evidence for our view; our tele-scan reveals that the Aurelia Ship (we will have its location pin-pointed and we will examine it physically today) is made of material presently beyond our analysis. We do not have any substance so excellent. But the scan also reveals that the design of the ship is curiously flawed in a dozen respects. Our best designs are better *than* the design of the Aurelia Ship.

"Yes, we believe in Aurelia. Our tele-scan reveals that that is her name, or very close to her name. We believe that she is from 'Shining World.' And we do have hard evidence for the existence of 'Shining World.' We even believe that she has been sent to govern our world for a while, unobtrusively and benignantly. See the tele-scan tele-photos on page B9."

One inexcusable thing about the newspapers, they gave the small information but not the large information in their datelines and placelines. They always say what town they are published in and what country they are published in, but they do not say what world they are published in. And this is what Aurelia particularly wanted to know.

The Dobson City Telegraph was blunt about it:

“This Aurelia belongs to the ‘Flying Stogie’ myths. Consider the sort of people who have been promoting her, or at least have been in her company through much of last night. There is Karl Talion the phoney, and Julio Cordovan the phonies’ phoney. There is Helen Staircase ‘the biggest confidence woman in the world.’ There is the Prince of Nysa. There is the notorious Herr Boch. These persons were all attending, on a River Boat near notorious Mountain Lodge, what is unofficially called ‘The World’s Convention of Sharpies, Promotional Princes, and Confidence Persons.’ This is phoneydom itself. And the ‘Shining World Space-Ship’ just *happened* to land where they were holding their convention. Oh, look for some transparent exploitation from this! Most of the conventioners are notorious foreign agents grinding nationalistic axes here.”

The Citadel City Sentinel was very concerned however:

“Aurelia is in mortal danger. There have been several attempts to murder her on our own world during the night just passed. An ‘escaped convict,’ conveniently allowed to escape and given the ‘contract’ on her life, assaulted her right at the landing site. By an accident still not explained, the assassin lost his own life instead. Then there is the mysterious ‘Dark Antagonist’ who has been trailing Aurelia with murderous intent all the night. There was also an attempt by three unidentified men to throw Aurelia overboard from a River Boat into the churning water, and this attempt was barely thwarted. We now have evidence that Aurelia has been drugged by needle and commanded by the notorious tycoon Rex Golightly and brought to his luxury cabin ‘Potlatch.’ We do not believe that Golightly himself will murder her (he has other designs), but we do believe that she is in danger of being murdered at Golightly’s place, as is the notorious Golightly himself every day of his life. We say that she must be rescued from there and given the best protection that our world can afford. She is, after all, some sort of ambassador or minister or governess from ‘Shining World.’ We are organizing the ‘Committee to Free and Protect Aurelia,’ and we hope the committee will have fifty million members worldwide by noon today.”

Aurelia (she was a bit slow only in comparison to the other ‘Shining People’) digested this information and that of fifty other morning papers of the world instantly.

“Now I think that we will—install you here and make you comfortable, and in a half-hour or so you will begin to meet the people who really matter,” the tycoon Rex Golightly finished the sentence that he had begun an interval before. “Do enjoy yourself here, Aurelia. You will love ‘Potlatch,’ and ‘Potlatch’ will love you. You will see why I call it my luxury cabin.”

Aurelia knew about luxury, of course. In school she had studied ‘Luxury as a Fine Art,’ ‘The Implementation of Luxurious Living,’ ‘Luxury as the Meaningful Alternative,’ such courses as that.

And she knew about opulence. Back home, every family of the ‘Shining People’ lived in a state of opulence for one day every month for the good of their souls.

Aurelia even knew about Conspicuous Consumption. Almost every family of the ‘Shining People’ had one small and suspected, and second-rate, art work that had cost a month’s earnings. But that was only for token. On ‘Shining World’ there were such mountains of things waiting to be galvanized into some kind of use that the question was always “What can we conspicuously consume today?”

Aurelia had been in the homes of many of the ‘Shining Princes’ of her own world, so she felt the pleasant shock of recognition and welcome and kinship for the tycoon and his menage, and for the luxurious cabin that housed them all.

Here was luxury, here was opulence, here was conspicuous consumption.

The cabin-house ‘Potlatch’ had what every good house should have, one hundred rooms for comfort and utility, facilities for Spartan dining (the ancient Spartan dining halls would sit three hundred persons in the plain elegance that the soldier-princes liked, and the ancient models were followed here), chapel, library, art gallery, theatre, gymnasium, natatorium, dens, bars, game-rooms, club-rooms, courts for racquet and non-racquet events, in-cabin botanical gardens with their aerated glass walls merging with the larger botanical gardens outside, arsenal, moat (filled with carp), tarn (filled with croppie), trout stream (full of trout,) fountains (full of fountain fish), game park (full of deer and bison and black bears), fields of

big blue-stem grass and their cattle, stands of pecan trees, waving fields of peanuts and strawberries, race-courses, English Gardens, Italian Gardens.

Oh well, no cabin can have everything. 'Potlatch' had a lot.

"It really does remind me of home," Aurelia said.

The guests in the cabin were mostly ambassadors of different sorts, from cartels, from countries, from organized intellectual movements, from urbane hatchet groups, from moss-back unions ("One hundred and fifty years of moss can't be wrong!"), from slave-block and indenture-block organizations, from the structured satanism, from the privileged corn and porn groups, from the scientific and psychological and mathematical covenants, from the 'consensus creation' foundations. The lobbies of the cabin were full of lobbyists. The cabin-home 'Potlatch' was on the premium country-home circuit and it drew top guest. But they were adult guests. One almost forgot that 'Potlatch' had been there less than a week, and that it was really a tent.

Of the younger visitors, there were gilded youths, topaz youths, pomade youths who were the cherished and impressive companions of the in-family young people. About the young people, Rex Golightly had just received an anonymous note.

"There is an assassin among the gilded youths of your house. Your own sons do not know him, but they will say that they do. They do not know half of their guests, but they are impressed by them all and they will swear that they can vouch for them all. There will be distinguished and special blood of your cabin and on the thatch of your cabin if you do not act incisively. The name of your cabin will have to be changed from 'Potlatch' to 'Murder.' "

Well, what was the tycoon Rex Golightly going to do about that?

And then in the cabin, there was the permanent menage, the family itself. Say, they were something! There was something for everyone in the extensible, related and unrelated family of that pleasant tycoon Golightly.

This is the family that, for a while, adopted Aurelia that 'Shining Person,' governess of the world, the family that clasped her to its breasts (the asp bites that she got from this were slight ones) and thoraxes, to its bony rib-cages and its happy paunches, to its many-cockled hearts.

There was Rex Golightly himself, a man of high talent and taste that went well with the spacious vulgarity that he had first adopted for notice and gain and later had adopted for itself alone. There was his wife Redfire and his morganatic wife Burnt Umber. There were the brothers and sisters of tycoon Rex and his two wives, persons of talents more obscure and less useable. There were all the children of Rex, and the cousins and removed cousins. But Aurelia, who possibly was also kindred, for Rex insisted that there was a blood relationship between the Golightly's and the 'Shining People,' was most reminded of home by some of the 'goofy uncles.' Simon Golightly was her favourite among them.

"I am embarrassed to ask anyone else so I will ask you," Aurelia said to that Uncle Simon on the first morning. "What world is this? Yes, I really want to know. Yes, everybody gives me the 'Aw Haystacks, this is the end!' look whenever I ask, but you already have that look permanently, so it won't matter. Dammit, is this world Bandicoot?"

"Ah, Bandicoot, Bandicoot, dream planet of my youth," Uncle Silas drooled. "I was a soldier on the second invasion of Bandicoot. Those were the joyful years, the peaceful years. I fear that no years like them will ever come again."

"But if you were on the invasion force to Bandicoot," Aurelia said, "then this is either Skokumchuck or Hokey Planet or Gaea or Beggars' Choice or Sad-Dog Planet. Those are the only worlds of my assignment and type that have invaded Bandicoot in the present century. Oh tell me, Uncle Simon, what force were you with?"

Uncle Simon was bearded like a pard, like a very young pard. He had pin-whiskers like pin-feathers. Aurelia could not well judge the age of persons of this world, but she believed that Uncle Simon was not too many years older than himself. He was not an old man at all. He was on some medication or trip-faciant that made him vague and bumbling. Nevertheless, Aurelia liked him better than most of the kindred, even though adjustments might have to be made on anything he said. Sometimes he gave his name as Uncle Simon, and sometimes as Uncle Silas, so he was called by both.

"So, on a bright day of my youth we invaded Bandicoot," he said.

"But what world was Bandicoot invaded from?" Aurelia asked softly.

"From this one, of course," Uncle Silas said. "Would we invade from some other world?"

Contrary to the old saying, you *can* get there from here; but you can do it only if you start from here."

"But what world is this that we're on?" Aurelia asked. "I know that the question is silly, but I am willing to look silly for asking it. There's no other way to ask, and I want to know. What world is this?"

"Be quiet, little girl, and listen to my story," Uncle Simon or Silas said. Someone passed by in the corridor and Aurelia got an unclear whiff of whomever it was.

"It's odd that you two young people should have arrived the same day, and you are so different," Uncle Silas remarked. "And yet somehow you are linked together. Ah, our general when we invaded Bandicoot, he as General Ratwell. He was bow-legged. But he had one of his legs shot off the morning we got to Bandicoot. 'Well, don't just stand there,' the general told an orderly. 'Run to Supply and get a 'replacement.' The orderly ran to get an artificial leg, but he brought a straight one and not a bowed one. General Ratwell was more than furious when he saw this. 'It will not match!' he howled. 'Go get an artificial *bowed* leg.' The orderly went to Supply again, but the only artificial legs they had were straight ones. 'What a way to run an army,' the general roared. 'This is a scandal beyond believing.'"

"I think so too," Aurelia said. She kissed Uncle Silas and sauntered away. Pin-whiskers and all, she was sure that Uncle Silas was not very much older than herself.

Then there was Uncle Gifford Redwing who was a 'funny uncle.' Gifford had the voice and delivery of a cheap-shot comedian. People often laughed when he came to the punch line in his patter. If they did not, then he would come to the same punch lines again and again until they did laugh. Uncle Gifford was very fond of Aurelia, and there was no way he could keep his hands off her. He had the idea that the 'Shining World' that she had come from was a very permissive place, and he wished to show that his own world was equally permissive.

"I will do anything for you, anything at all, Aurelia," Uncle Gifford would say. "You and I, Aurelia, are the only two really advanced persons around here. We are not bound by the rules that bind lesser persons. And, come to think of it, the lesser people are not bound by any rules either. Do you not find clothing oppressive in such warm weather?"

"Not at all," Aurelia said. "I have thermostatic skin, of course, I do not feel the heat ever. I wear clothes for modesty and ornament." Aurelia had never heard of thermostatic skin on people. That was one of the things she made up.

"Be nice to me and I will give you anything, anything," Uncle Gifford said.

"Well, bring me Cousin Clotie's head on a platter then," she told him. Cousin Clotie was the one of whom she had caught the unclear but remembered whiff in the corridor when she was talking to Uncle Silas.

"Would you like to play nature games?" Uncle Gifford asked. "Would you like to skinny dip? Would you like to show me some of the more advanced techniques from your 'Shining World?' You would be surprised at the techniques that we have here. Here, here, there is nothing secret or hidden about me. I am all unencumbered, as you see. Do you know that everyone from this huge and palatial cabin has gone off somewhere now, except Cousin Clotie who is lurking somewhere in the corridor? Come, my dear, we have so much to show each other. Oh, come, come, this is the end of the charade. Now! I said now!"

This was a slippery situation for Aurelia. She had resolved not to break or kill anyone else on this world. Everyone from the huge palatial cabin had indeed gone off somewhere, except possibly Cousin Clotie who had been whiffed unclearly but disturbingly. And Uncle Gifford was intending to take things by unctuous violence. What do I do? Aurelia had never tied the Instrumental Knot. Did she remember how it was supposed to go?

Aurelia was alone on a world that she didn't even know the name of, a young and weak girl defenceless and unarmed, without friends anywhere near, and confronted by a sanctionless and sloppy fiend. And the fiend had a hold of her, avid to force his evil will on her, with his fetid breath rattling his whole body (that was a good phrase; Aurelia had read it in a book once), and with his instrument actually barking and howling in its passion.

Poor Aurelia. What could she do?

She tied an Instrumental Knot in it, that's what she did.

That man Uncle Gifford made quite a noise about it when it happened to him. And he kept up the noise for some time, until the empty luxury cabin had filled up again with curious and apprehensive persons. Some persons do not know about the Instrumental Knot. They regard it as only a legend of 'Shining World.' Experts were sent for and flown in.

"Dear girl," said the knot expert who had been rushed in by the Navy. "Do you know how to untie this knot?"

"Oh sure," Aurelia said, "but it can't be untied in a single day. Maybe not in a single week."

"Dear girl," said the consulting doctor, the world's foremost expert on every sort of constriction. "This knot has brought things to a topographical impasse. There isn't any way to untie it. The whole Universe would have to be pulled through the loop to untie this knot, and that's impossible. Girl, there has never been seen anything like this on this world before."

Oh, that Uncle Gifford was making a big and painful noise about it all!

"Just what world is this anyhow?" Aurelia asked. "Really, I want to know. You tell me what world this is and I might tell you something about that knot."

"Is there a way to untie that knot, Aurelia? He might die of it, you know."

"He might, yes, but he shouldn't have let himself get in such bad condition. But no funny Uncles ever die of little things like that. Yes, there is a way to untie it. Certainly the whole Universe had to be pulled through the loop to untie it, but that's easier than it sounds. Here, I'll write down how to do it. And you write down the name of this world. Is it Ragsdale? Is it Paravata? Is it Yellow Dog? Is it Gaea? Is it Aphthonica? Uncle Gifford sure is roaring loudly, isn't he. I bet he's really hurting."

"Yes. A knot like that will inflict the worst pain known to man," the doctor said. "Ah, how simply it is, now that you write it down. I'll untie it in just a moment and have him out of his agony. But this last twist, that will still hold it, won't it, Aurelia?"

"Yes. That's the time twist. You still can't untie it till the time runs out."

"And when will that be, Aurelia?" asked the doctor who was the foremost constriction expert in the world.

"When I leave this world, that's when the time will be out on it. Then you will be able to untie the knot if you follow those instructions. By the way, what is this world? I will just read its name that you have written here. —Ah, nothing. Say, does invisible ink on every world use a banana-oil base? When will it come clear? When will I be able to read it?"

"When you leave this world, Aurelia," the consulting doctor said. "You have a special shine on you when you're playing tricks, do you know that? When you have left this world, then you will be able to read its name. You can't know where you are, but you can know where you have been."

"A dirty ethnic trick you pulled, consulting doctor," Aurelia said.

"A dirty ethnic trick you pulled, shining person Aurelia," the doctor said.

And Uncle Gifford howled and roared.

"Aurelia," said the tycoon Rex Golightly, "if you will not untie the knot, can you not at least shut Giff up some way?"

"Oh sure," Aurelia said. She chopped Uncle Gifford over the oesophagus. This blow is known on most of the worlds, but they have brought it to the highest pitch on 'Shining World.' The voice of Uncle Gifford was killed completely, for how long a time was not known. But his suffering was now more and not less than it had been before.

"I have received a note that you are in great danger here, Aurelia," the tycoon Rex Golightly said that evening. "I am taking silent precautions, but I wonder if you could tell me where the danger is most likely to come from?"

"No. It could come from anywhere," Aurelia said. "I am in great danger here, but I would be in danger of assassination anywhere on this world. All who govern strange worlds are in danger of death every minute of their governorship."

"I will defend Aurelia," young Uncle Silas said. "When she retires tonight, I will sleep like a faithful dog across her doorway. No one will be able to get in without waking me. And if I wake I will howl till the whole cabin hears."

"That isn't a bad idea, Silas," Rex Golightly said. "You aren't good for anything else. Maybe you will be a good guard dog."

So that night, Uncle Silas, the muddled boy with the pin-whiskers and the doggy eyes, slept across Aurelia's doorway to give her protection. And no one could go in there without waking or dispatching Uncle Silas first.

But did he provide safety enough?

There was, for one thing among many, a strange guest among the young people of the luxury cabin. The young persons of the family had been calling him Cousin Clootie that day,

but they had no idea what sort of cousin he was of theirs. Aurelia had caught an unclear whiff of Cousin Clootie in the corridor. She had caught a clear whiff of the Dark Antagonist on the River Boat. She knew now that they were the same. This was the person who had arrived onto this world only minutes after Aurelia herself had arrived. She didn't know anything about him, and yet she shivered over some of the implications.

Yes, the Dark Antagonist (under the name of Cousin Clootie) was a guest at 'Potlatch.' The sons of the house did not really know him, but they said that they knew him and that they could vouch for him.

The next morning began badly. Young Uncle Silas, still lying across Aurelia's doorway to protect her, was found to be decapitated.

Oh come on! Do not take it so easily. Do not be urbane and brave about this. Of course he was a befuddled youth who was good for nothing. But Aurelia had liked him more than any of the others. So had the tycoon Rex Golightly. Silas or Simon, had been befuddled but good. The others of the kindred were brighter and sharper, but not quite such good persons. But everybody in the cabin was shocked and broken up by it.

Or were they?

Cousin Cloutie came and gazed. He was the Dark Antagonist. He came from elsewhere. The veins of his temples throbbed and crawled as if black lightning were flickering about him, but he showed no emotion. His was a fire-blackened iron face. And yet there was nothing at all that anyone could say against him, and he had given them no grounds for suspicion.

People came to dispose of Uncle Silas. They loaded his body onto a bier and began to carry it away, but they left the head there.

"Oh, no, no," Aurelia cried, and she carried the head and ran after them.

"They do not need the head, Aurelia," Rex Golightly explained patiently. "Identification has already been made. He was known. He really was a blood kindred of the family. The body will fulfil all legal requirements. They'll not need the head. We can throw it out anywhere. You're getting blood all over you. Yes, the head is very fresh cut, possibly only a minute before you or someone else rose to a noise. Silas may have been an obstacle. He may not have closed his eyes all night until he closed them just a moment before he was killed. And then it may have been too close a call with the dawn for the assassin to kill you. I understand how you fell, Aurelia since he may well have given his life to save yours. But throw the head away anywhere."

"Oh, no, no," Aurelia cried. She ran after the bearers of the bier and place Uncle Silas' head in his own arms. And yet there was something incomplete about the act. On 'Shining World,' they had wailers who were professionals and who knew how to wail a dead person. On this world, whatever it was, they seemed to have no such thing.

"There should be professionals," Aurelia said dully to Rex Golightly, and she was all smeared and blurred with still fresh blood.

"Yes, professionals, Aurelia. I did have several in the house, and yet somehow I trusted to an amateur, poor Uncle Silas going away there, for your ultimate protection. I should have known better. Today I will have in a real professional the best bodyguard in the nation."

Yes, that morning had begun badly.

By the permission of the tycoon Rex Golightly, several of the genial Special Interest Advocates had been talking to Aurelia that day. They wanted to hear about the latest Special Advocacy Techniques on 'Shining World.' They wished to discover whether there was not something in them that they could adapt to their own world.

"Which is?" Aurelia asked brightly, but they would not rise to her bright bait.

"I have a theoretical and perhaps practical question also, Miss Aurelia," said a talented special interest manipulator named Kirol Crabman. "I am wondering what sort of instructions you are given in the schools of 'Shining World' about the 'raw-grab' situation. There is a corporation that I wish to possess cost free. It is named the Southern Land Company, and it has been going its own quiet way. How would a 'raw-grabber' grab it off?"

"What is the name of your own company, Mr. Crabman?" Aurelia asked.

"Crabman's Take-Over Enterprises."

"And there is no connection between the companies, now or previously?"

"No. None."

"Well, first you must change the name of your company to the Northern Land Company. This sets up a name counterpoise to the Southern Land Company that you are going to take over. Or else you can set up a raiding branch of your company to be named the North

Southern Land Company. Then you turn to the media and have them go heavily on the 'Oh, what is this fence that divides them!' motif. All media everywhere like to go heavy on the O WITFTDT motif. Have them wail 'Oh, why must there be this division?' Have them pontificate 'Oh, that there should ever be any 'Northern' or 'Southern, shame! There should only be the great and noble Land Company itself. Have them puff it up, and then go to the churches which form the most subservient arm of the media. Have them set up 'Prayers for Reunion.' Have them demand that the unelected and illegal and divisive ownership of the Southern Land Company shall abdicate before any settlement can be negotiated. They you move in with the active phase of the take-over."

"And what is that, little girl Aurelia?"

"Infiltrate and invade, with blessings and banners flying. Infiltrate the Procurement, Purchasing, and Internal Management departments of the Southern Land Company. Have your allies ready to scream 'Lookout!' if there is any objection. Bring in duplicate desks and crowd them in beside every desk of the old and illegal southern operation, and staff the desks with your own 'Freedom' persons. Have 'Coalition Now!' slogans boomed over the sound system of that "illegal" southern operation. Have writs issued forbidding interfering with any of the Liberation People occupying their new desks and carrying out their duties of reorganizing the firm. Reiterate the claim that the innocent infiltrators who are only interested in 'liberation' are being arrested and held in 'monkey cages.' Have students for Liberation kidnap and kill the president of the old and illegal Southern Land Company. Have the United Churchmen for Liberation and Reunion reissue the famous statement for the erased president of the discredited firm 'The World is Better for his going and Cleaner for his Death.' United Churchmen for Liberation love to issue statements like that.

"Then, with the support of everyone flowing in, you can feel free to move a little bit more roughly and directly. Take it over! And then demand reparations from whomever you can think of."

"And that is what they teach you in your schools about pushing a 'raw-grab' situation, little girl?"

"That's the basis of it. I suppose that one can improvise for the individual case."

"But that is the same thing that they teach in the vocational schools of our own world here," Kirol Crabman said. "Really, I expected something a little more ingenious and imaginative and developed from a representative of 'Shining World,' something more in line with the 'wave of the Future.' "

"Ah, but the raw-grab device is a 'Wave of the Past,' " Aurelia said, and there was no way that Crabman could understand her. "Say is this Kolokynthekephale or Pumpkin-Head World?"

"No, of course this is not Pumpkin-Head World. Oh, you are joking, girl."

"And I myself have a theoretical and perhaps practical problem," said that talented Peoples' League spokesman and advocate Peter Principle. "When a leader whom one hates and loathes is riding high, how does one bring him down?"

"Trust to gravity is one way," Aurelia said. "All leaders, like all of everything else, tend to come down sooner or later. Their underpinning erodes and they crash. Or are you in a hurry?"

"The Peoples' League has been in a hurry to destroy him for twenty years. We were sure that we had done it once. He was dead and buried. And then he resurrected and manifested himself, and the second coming of that man was worse than the first."

"Find out his great sins and his great weaknesses and publish them and howl them up," Aurelia said.

"He doesn't have any," Peter Principle stated miserably. "We've been over him with a curry comb for more than twenty years and haven't found even one nit. His only sin is his tedious sinlessness. He hasn't grafted, he hasn't been a lecher, he hasn't failed to deliver on any of his promises. But he has blocked us in some of our expansions and appropriations. We dream of him hanging and turning slowly in the wind. We dream of urinating on his grave. Oh, will those happy dreams ever come true!" But Peter Principle was grinning. He either did not really feel strongly on this subject, or his happy dreams had already come true in every case of this type.

"Remember that the persistent hammer will *finally* drive the nail into the coffin," Aurelia said. "Do not give up if progress seems slow. And always remember that *good* men are easier

to crucify than bad men. And realize that every man when skinned takes on a repulsive aspect and can hardly be looked at without loathing.

"Find something, or make something. If you have established the climate, the details will not matter. What things are manufactured against a man do not have to be deep at all; only about a sixteenth of an inch deep. And remember that people love to hate. Red-flag the man with the hate flag, draw bright blood on him, and blow the hate bugles. That's all that is needed. Skin him! By machination or by media, skin him! Then hoot him to death because he is skinned and bloody. It will get easier and easier."

"And then what?" Peter Principle asked pleasantly.

"The victory is when two hundred million persons breathe through dilated nostrils 'Let him hang and turn slowly in the wind.' That is it," Aurelia said.

"And the people will not see through such a transparent device, little girl?"

"Of course they will see through it, and they will go along with it. It is an audience participation assassination.' That is the mortal sin of them. They love to hate. Give them a sharper hatred and they will beat a path to your door."

"But that is the same thing that we teach in People's League schools on this world," Peter said. "I expected something a bit more inventive from the think-halls of 'Shining World.' "

"I'm sorry," Aurelia said. "We really haven't bothered to go beyond this. It is practical. It is passionate. And it gives the people flesh and bones that they *can* get their fangs into. Say, is this Hokey Planet that we are on?"

"No, of course this isn't Hokey Planet," Peter said. "Oh, you're joking, girl."

"And I have what is perhaps an impractical problem to ask you about, young girl," said George Cheros the astronomer. "There are some things that even the most primitive people believe they understand in depth, and one of them is practical astronomy. We do not believe that we are too primitive here on this world, and we—"

"Just what is this world?" Aurelia asked seriously. "What's its name?"

"What is this world, little girl? Well, perhaps we will come to that in the course of our exposition. Now here is the problem:

"It is once believed that our own Earth had an anti-Earth as an opposite and hidden companion. It was believed that Earth and anti-Earth were exactly on opposite sides of our sun, and therefore they would always be invisible to each other. It was believed that they were identical in all ways, except one, and that one way could hardly be defined without setting up conflict in the entire universe. Well, it was thought that these two worlds were completely similar and at the same time completely opposite. But, when we began to nibble at space and go out of our own orbit, we saw that there was not any anti-Earth. And so that story died.

"But when we nibbled at space a little deeper, we saw that very many worlds *did* have anti-worlds exactly opposite them in their orbit around their sun. This seemed to be the normal case. And we found from persons who went into space that they could never see the anti-worlds of their own world, though persons from other worlds could see them. We even find that persons from, 'Shining World,' and our best guess is that you come from there, Aurelia, cannot see their own Dark Companion, though people of other worlds can see it. Can you explain it?"

"Oh, I suppose so," Aurelia said, "but I will give you back what you have given me. This world we are on (Oh, somebody tell me what the name of this world is—is it Sad-Dog Planet? Is it Gelotopolia? Is it Gaea? Is it Dombon's World?) This world that we are on, it does have an anti-world. I saw it clearly as I came in. I was afraid that I would come down there. It would not have been of the class approved for me, even though it is identical to this world that is. But anti-world is there. And you do not see it. But persons from other worlds do see it. Tell me why you do not see your own anti-world, and perhaps I can tell you why we do not see our own. Other than the fact, of course, that we do not have one, and you do have one."

"But you do have one, Aurelia," Cousin Clotie said. He was the Dark Adversary and he was always interrupting, "I know you have one. I come from there."

Aurelia went well-guarded to speak to some school children that day. It is always good show to go and speak to school children. Most of them were about two years younger than she was, and all of them were four grades behind her. Some of them, though, were quite large and were as old as Aurelia and even older. There was a dislocation of misplaced or held-back

students here.

The students showed a tendency to be unruly when Aurelia was left in charge of them. Then she spoke a phrase sharply, and they shut up and paid attention. The guards who withdrew to the back of the room did not understand the phrase that Aurelia used, and indeed it seemed to be in some strange language. And it was.

But what phrase *had* Aurelia spoken to the little and the big buggers to make them behave? Are there certain phrases known only to the children of the various worlds? Yes, there are. And this phrase translated out “I’ll break your necks,” and it carried a modifier to show that Aurelia meant it. The little and big buggers listened to her then, and they had a fruitful conversation. And Aurelia finished with a demonstration, and then a rather startling and challenging explication of that demonstration.

“A drop of water covering a hole in a leaf is a natural lens-microscope by which things may be seen enlarged,” she said. “I have just made such a microscope, and then several of you have made simple things, and all of you have looked at things magnified through them. So we know that the ‘natural microscope’ does exist.

“But do you know that there also exist, equally simple, the natural radio, the natural telephone, the natural colour camera, the natural computer, the natural microphone, the natural electric battery? You do not know what they are? Think, children, think. Most of them are as simple as putting a drop of water over the hole in a leaf. Build them now, or arrange them rather. Right here, right now, from things in this room, from things in your school desks. I give you five minutes.”

Well, they did it in five minutes, but just barely. Some of the solutions were not quite what Aurelia expected. There is more than one way to make several of these things.

Then Aurelia looked out over a throng that was not there.

“Well, can *you* make the things, big people?” she asked. “Try it. Make them right now, from things at hand. I give you ten minutes, since you are slower than children in your wits. Make them. Arrange them.”

Well, the people in the invisible throng did make all the things within ten minutes, but just barely.

“I have a speculative question to ask you, Aurelia,” said Charles Greenpasture who was a speculative theologian,” or at least I have some notions that you might react to. You are (I can see it) a light-footed, happy-eyed child of grace. I would not put these propositions to one less blessed. Whether because of the extremes of either reverence or irreverence, the qualities of God are seldom discussed temperately on any of the worlds. But you are a blessed person of easy and comfortable reverence. Let us discuss then whether God is identical to the Universe; whether God is both all-good and all-powerful; and whether all-good and all-powerful are necessarily the same things, or at least implicit in each other. The odds really seem prohibitive against two such extreme qualities being possessed by the same individual. And let us try to put it all into terms of mathematics and physics. Was the ‘Big Bang’ the birth of both God and the Universe? What equations were created by these births? And are they still valid equations? What do you propose, Aurelia?”

“You speculate first,” Aurelia suggested. “We touched on these things in school, but I am not very good at the ongoing speculation in contingent areas.”

“The ‘Zero Equation’ was the only equation created at the ‘Big Bang’ moment,” Cousin Clotie interrupted. (Aw, how does that guy always get in on these things!) “It all begins at zero, and it all returns to zero. The apparent activity in between these zero times will obliterate itself. Once time begins to run backwards, extinction and ‘never-have-been’ will appear walking hand-in-claw. They will disappear into the hole, and then it will be found that the phrase ‘to pull the hole in after one’ is more than a metaphor.”

“Oh, go out and play in the mud, you youngling of whatever species,” snapped Charles Greenpasture who did not like Cousin Clotie, though he had never seen him before. “Let us try this, Aurelia—

“Let us consider the Birth of God as instantaneous with the ‘Big Bang.’ Consider that the physical and mathematical laws may have been different in that quasi-instant before physics and mathematics were created. Consider that opportunities may have been more open at the beginning, or just before the beginning. With processes perhaps many billions of times more accelerated than that at any time later (since their acceleration created the law of acceleration but might not have conformed with it), with an exponential explosion of everything, and with

all the time in the world and all the time that would ever be, there might have been an intellectual giantism generated, such a giantism as still maintains and controls the Universe. Consider a calculator with a total mass (all the mass there was or would ever be), with a mass of billions of billions of galaxies, is there any limit to what it could think and do? It might not have been a sophisticated calculator right at the beginning, but in the thousands of billions of years that were contained in that quasi-moment, with everything running full speed (even before speed was invented) it might easily become very sophisticated. After all, it was up to the calculator to define sophistication, there being nothing else around to do it.

"That intellectual giantism, that might have been called 'The Mind of God' if it wanted itself to be called such, might have been the sum as well as the counterpoint of all the energy in the Universe. And then the whole process could have been back-edited, and raised to as many powers as wanted. Before limits were invented, there were not limits. Exponentially expanded chaos could have been as all-good and as all-powerful as it wished.

"Why should *not* God control and indwell every particle of the Universe? At the moment of the 'Big Bang,' He was every particle of the Universe. On the other hand, consider that maybe the 'Big Bang' was an explosive cancer by which the proto-order went out of control. Consider that maybe ourselves and all of the worlds are cancerous units of destruction."

"Mr. Greenpasture, you are treating this as a simple case of bi-lateral compensation," Aurelia said. "You restrict exponential explosions when you imply that they might be no more than bilateral or point-to-point equal. When you speak of 'all the mass there was and all that there would ever be' you are speaking out of much too small a concept. It is not a bi-lateral equation. It is a billion-lateral equation."

"But, Aurelia, isn't that simply to billionize the sums by adding exponents? Why not keep the bi-lateral aspect, the symmetry?"

"Maybe so," Aurelia said. "The period when we had that in school, I wasn't paying much attention."

"Do you know that there are problem children in problem classes on this world who carry these things out further than do your children on 'Shining World?' " Mr. Greenpasture asked proudly.

"I suppose so," Aurelia admitted again. "After all, if problem children are not good at solving problems, then who will be good at solving them? I believe in the Law of Planetary Constancy. This is an expansion of the Law of Intellectual Constancy, a law that is always very hard to take for such as believe themselves intellectually superior. The Law of Planetary Constancy states that all planets are approximately equal in their potential, all of them from 'Shining World' to Skokumchuck. It states that the people on the grubby worlds are just as smart as those on the bright worlds, though sometimes they have poor ways of showing it. We on 'Shining World' are not (Oh really, believe it!), not so much smarter than other people as all that. But, oh it is painful to admit this!"

Tycoon Rex Golightly brought the highly professional bodyguard, the best in the world, to talk with Aurelia that day.

"Aurelia, this is the illustrious Marshal Straightstreet," the tycoon Rex Golightly said warmly. "I have known him since our college days. He is the man of the most integrity that I have ever known in my life."

"Then why don't you recognize him now?" Aurelia thought but did not say. "Aw, haystacks, what's the matter with you anyhow?"

"You are silent, Aurelia," Rex Golightly said, and Aurelia was silent.

"Marshal is more than a bodyguard," Rex said. "He has been bodyguard for entire nations and leagues. He is probably the most trusted and dependable man in the world. You do not say anything, Aurelia?" Aurelia did not say anything.

Marshal Straightstreet broke a rule for men of outstanding station or repute on this world, Aurelia noticed. It is a rule observed on worlds with a certain primitive mentality streak in them, though they may not be in all respects primitive worlds. It is the rule that an eminent man (the rule does not apply to women) should be somewhat larger and taller than his fellows. Aurelia had already learned to gauge the supposed eminence of a man by his height. Her own host, Rex Golightly, was quite an eminent man. Real eminence seemed always to stand more than two meters tall. But the illustrious Marshal Straightstreet, the best bodyguard in the world, was considerably short of that height.

"I am charmed to meet you, Shining Visitor Aurelia," Marshal said. But Aurelia was silent.

He was lithe, and of a rapid and intense musculature sheathed in what was the proper flesh for the occasion (was he the man of a thousand fleshes then?); he was good-humoured and intelligent in body as well as mind; he had fire-grey eyes and experienced histrionic eyebrows; he had now a cat-purr voice that showed the insufferable conceit of a tiger (was he the man of a thousand voices also?); but he was still shorter than true eminence should be according to the Primitive-mentality trait.

"Marshal Straightstreet has prevented the assassination of no less than seventeen heads of state," Rex Golightly said proudly.

"For better or worse?" Aurelia asked in her mind but not out loud.

"He was once the amateur middle-weight boxing champion of the world," Rex said.

"If they met today, which of them would win?" Aurelia asked silently in her mind.

"And he is an Ultimate-Mind-And-Body-Combat Grand Master," Rex continued. "You do not say anything, Aurelia?" Aurelia did not say anything.

"Really, Aurelia," Marshal Straightstreet said with an edge to his cat-purr voice, "if I am to guard your life and well-being, you must at least acknowledge my presence." But Aurelia did not.

"Do you not practice the amenities on 'Shining World,' Aurelia?" Rex Golightly asked in displeased banter.

"Oh, we've met before," Aurelia said out loud then. "Aye, and we've drunk blood together."

"I have heard that that is one of the archaic-cryptic greeting forms that some of the older families on 'Shining World' still use," Rex Golightly said in a sort of apology for Aurelia, but he had never heard any such thing.

"My methods are air-tight," Marshal began to explain. "I do not permit error in my operation. We Grand Masters have the saying 'when something has already happened, it is already too late to prevent it from happening.' I make a point of knowing every event relating to my case at hand many hours before it happens."

"Then why didn't you know about little Uncle Silas being beheaded before it happened?" Aurelia asked in a surly voice.

"Perhaps I did know about it before it happened," Marshal said. "But the murder of young Silas is completely unrelated to the contemplated murder of yourself, Aurelia."

"How is that, how is that?" Rex Golightly asked.

"The decapitation of young Silas or Simon was just an adolescent strangeness here. Many

the adolescents in this house behave like strange particles. I believe that Silas was killed without hate or passion. He was funny-looking. He was put together awkwardly. I believe that one of the out-of-context adolescents simply said, 'How would he look with his head moved over here?' and so he moved it some distance from the body to find out. That is only theory, of course. But his killing was without purpose. Possibly it was a rock thrown to distract us from the real threats to Aurelia, but I do not believe that it was even that."

"I will sleep much better knowing that Marshal is in the house," Rex said.

"I suspect that I might sleep a modicum better knowing *where* he is," Aurelia said, and she left them abruptly.

How was it that Rex Golightly was fooled? He said that he had been to college with Marshal Straightstreet and had known him well. Where was the real Marshal Straightstreet now? Couldn't Rex even remember or fail to recognize a personal odour? Aurelia had to conclude that the inhabitants of this world, whatever it was, just couldn't smell very well, or were undisciplined in their smelling. Were not personal odours used here for identification?

The false bodyguard, who might possibly be the best in the world at something, who might be better than the real Marshal Straightstreet at some sorts of conspiracies, was Julio Cordovan, the man of a thousand faces. Aurelia had indeed met him and drunk blood with him, when he was wearing a different one of his faces.

The 'Kill Aurelia Now' League was demonstrating outside of the luxury cabin. This organization had been in existence less than an hour and already had more than ten million members worldwide. Infiltrators in the League said that its people believed that Aurelia was giving herself airs of superiority and that she must be killed for that. And they believed that she held unacceptable views. But mostly, it was just that they wanted someone to kill, and who would it be so satisfying to kill as this 'Shining Person' Aurelia?

Aurelia now discovered that she had an appointments secretary, and the secretary told her that she had an appointment with Walter Kunste H.H.H. (High Honcho of the Humanities.) So she talked with Walter.

"Do you realize that you have given rise to a whole new theory of discordancies, Miss Aurelia?" Walter asked. "A group of 'with-it' people recorded the sound of your horns as you landed. The result is amazing. They haven't the depth or intricacy of some of the discordancies of this world, but they bring a new simplicity to discords. How could such obvious falsities of tone have been overlooked by our searchers for discords? They are wonderful, and they are pregnant with further wonders. Nothing like them has ever been heard on this world before."

"By and by, what is this world?" Aurelia asked. "I really want to know. Is it Bandicoot? Is it Gaea? Is it Skokumchuck? Is it Groll's Planet? Is it Aphthonica? I believe that by the process of elimination I have it down to these five, but which one of the five is it that we are on?"

"This is the only one of them that appreciates discordancies," Walter Kunste said. "The others are all for harmony and beauty. And so I believed that 'Shining World' was also, until the recording of the shouting of your horns opened my ears. Are there other such masters of primitive discordancies on 'Shining World?' "

"Unfortunately yes," Aurelia said, "but not so many of them. None of us wants to produce discords, you see. For myself, it is just that I have a bad sense of tone and tune, and each of us must produce his own sound and music on 'Shining World.' I'm rotten at it, but I wish I weren't."

"Wonderful, and still more wonderful," Walter said. "Do you know that the discordancy of your horns is the only thing, so far, that is saving you from the wrath of the mob outside? Partisans of yours are telling the 'Kill Aurelia Now' League people that anyone with horns like yours cannot be all good. Myself, I do want to produce discords, but I have never attained such discordancy as that. All of us are in love—hate with discord. You are familiar with the work of Retchin' Gretchen? What a brave regurgitation she does produce in almost everyone! Visual discords, tactile discords, auditory discords, gustatory discords, olfactory discords, we love-hate them all. We have a group that meets Wednesday evenings at 'Rotten Ralph's the Rottenest Restaurant in the World.' There are pulmotors and stomach-pumps always available for all, since we are still a little bit queasy or qualmish about crossing over to actual death. One of our mottos is 'The Rot of Death Without Death Itself.'"

"Ours is a gusto-disgusto dynamic. That is what all the arts and humanities are about.

Throughout this dynamic there are only half-things and never-full-things. This is Wednesday. Will you join the most illustrious of the rotters at Rotten Ralph's tonight?"

"Oh, I don't believe so," Aurelia said. "I'd be a little bit nervous going through that 'Kill Aurelia Now' crowd."

"They wouldn't hinder you, not if they knew that you were going to Rotten Ralph's. It is a holy-unholy place to them, even to those who are not illustrious enough to be admitted there. We work always towards the inward alignment of our basic to the final stenchiness that is our home. We go from the humanities to the animalities, and from the animalities to the diabolities. Wherever we stand, there must be these two cellars under our feet, and perhaps still others going deeper and deeper. They are the primordial caves that we wish to return to. At the same time we are completely ahistoric. We believe in the world of the absolutely 'pure present.'"

"What does that do to the pure-impure dynamic?" Aurelia asked. "Is not the 'pure present' only half a thing? Isn't it a thing with its dynamic lost?"

"Girl, I never thought of that. You must come to Rotten Ralph's tonight and discuss these things with the Mucky Masters. Remember that a pretty face turned inside out is always an ugly face."

"Yah, gory ugly," Aurelia agreed.

"We will always insist on the dirty union of the 'Shining Statement' and the 'Dark Antagonist,' " Walter said.

"In a particular local case, you will insist on it in vain."

"We love dementia. We love delirium. In each of us there will be two opposite persons, the 'Shining Statement' and the 'Dark Antagonist.' We can live together only in a brawling and violent delirium and dementia. This is what we love-hate. In most individuals, these two persons do not continue to live together. One of the 'interior persons' murders the other one, and thereafter the 'corpse within' is carried about. This is the case with persons who are said to be at peace with themselves, that they shall carry a rotten corpse around within them, and that they have lost their dynamic."

"I should think that you'd like the 'rotten-corpse-within' bit," Aurelia said.

"And I do like it, but sometimes we must make choices. Two rotting bodies within are better than one. And that they be rotting-alive is somehow more exciting even than that they be rotting-dead. You understand that what I am talking about is the whole essence of the humanities and arts."

"What do you people have for dessert at Rotten Ralph's?" Aurelia asked. "How do you top the stenchy main courses?"

"Come and see tonight. The dessert is always a surprise. And it is never bland."

But Aurelia didn't go to Rotten Ralph's that night. She was told by one of her new friends in the house that High Honchos of the Humanities, imposing as they sound, are a dime for ten of them; and that Walter Kunste was not even on the Main-Stream of the Essence of Arts on this world.

He was on the Rotten River which is somehow larger and more swollen than the main stream.

Aurelia had an appointment with Rory McCory the great numerologist and seminal mathematician.

"I have an irrational question to ask you, young lady," Rory said to Aurelia. "I do not mean that it is a silly question. This irrational question is analogous to an irrational number, something that we must use now and then. My question concerns the prime number that some persons believe is between Five and Seven, and which some persons do not believe is between Five and Seven. What do you know about a whole prime number between Five and Seven, my dear?"

"Only that it isn't there," Aurelia said. "Where such a number seems to be introduced by some sort of illusion, there will be corruption in that case and constriction in that people."

"There is such a prime number," Cousin Cloutie stated. (Aw, why was that fellow always around and interrupting?) "It even had a name."

"Yes, it's true, Aurelia," McCory said. "Many persons believe that there is such a number, and they use it in their mathematics."

"Oh, what people?" Aurelia asked impatiently. "Of what world? What grubby people are those?"

"We ourselves," said McCory, "on this grubby world. Without this number there would be no regularity and no sequence at all. This is the stumbler that I run into again and again. I am told repeatedly that people of 'Shining World,' and of many other worlds, do not have this number and do not even believe in it. Why not? Why Not?"

"Oh, because it isn't there," Aurelia said simply. "And what is all this regularity and sequence that you talk about? It is false. There is no flexibility and no openness if you use that cursed number. There would be static recurrency only. The sequence would return to the same place every time, which is the same thing as not moving at all. The stasis would be more serious in the mind than in the world, but it would produce a hobbled and manacled world like—well, I'm afraid like this one. It is only the regularity of chains. It is a sequence that cannot even break away from itself for short-cuts or intuitions. There is no bounce to people who use that number, no glow to them. There is no transcending, no double-jointing. There are no 'dimensions beyond.' We were taught that someday we would meet strange people who believed in and would try to intrude an extra number. We were told that they were, perhaps, incurable in their folly."

"But Aurelia," the numerologist insisted again. "There is such a number. We use it all the time. We work problems with it. We cannot do without it."

"Try," Aurelia suggested. "Maybe you can."

"This number, which is named—" the numerologist tried again.

"Please! I am a lady!" Aurelia spoke sharply. "Do not name it in my presence. I know what it is. It is the Hell number. Thrice spoken (or spat), it is the Number of the Beast. But the 'Shining People' do not use it at all."

(Note: A variant version says that the rogue number is inserted between Eight and Nine. But we cannot accept that; here we have a number between eight and nine, and it is a normal number, not a rogue number. But people somewhere are inserting a rogue number that does not belong.)

Then Aurelia had an appointment with the Pan-Math and Science Boluxus named James Forcedmarch.

"We have brought implications to a high art here on our world," Forcedmarch said.

"For the record, what world is this?" Aurelia asked. "What is its name? I really want to know."

"World nomenclature is a random thing," Forcedmarch said, "as is the very knowledge of world existence. For an instance, we know of your own 'Shining World' only by implication."

"I have only mentioned that name by accident of forgetfulness since I have been here," Aurelia said. "And besides, that isn't the name of it."

"We have never had a visual on 'Shining World,'" Forcedmarch said. "I suspect that we could see it if we knew where to look. We do have good specifications on it, arrived at by deduction and implication. We know what net it belongs to, or we believe that we do. But, as you know, there are sixty-four possible world locations in every implicit network. Could you give us the bearings of it, Aurelia?"

"I can't even give you the bearings of where I am right now."

"Well, it would almost be a form of cheating to get the information from you, even if you had it. There is no urgency about the matter at all. And if we start out to use the implication-solution we may as well use it all the way. We will have a visual on 'Shining World' within the next ten years, I believe. It has to be there, in its own place and its own style. Too many other things depend on it. If it were taken out of the special temporal and existential flow, the flow would be different. It has to be there, in a very key place, with a very key style. It and its Dark Companion form an absolute requirement."

"Shining World' has no 'Dark Companion,'" Aurelia said stoutly.

"So the citizens of every world say, that their world is companionless. Ah, and Ah a second time, so that's the way it is!"

James Forcedmarch had reached out, twice, to touch Aurelia on the arm. The first time he had reached for her he had not quite touched her, but he had felt an unearthly sensation that was not strictly tactile. And the second time, he touched her easily enough.

"You have a pseudo-surface and a true surface, Aurelia," Forcedmarch said. "That is the origin of the whispered rumour that you are not real and not solid, that there is nothing there when one would touch you. And yet the pseudo-surface and the real are no more than twenty millimetres apart."

"People of this world lack the outermost skin," Aurelia said.

"Yes, people of this world lack your electric outer skin that is visible but not material. We do have an electric aura, but it is not commonly visible and it does not fit us so snugly. You are quite a slim girl if we do not consider your electric outer skin, but a little more full-bodied if we do consider it."

"Why should you not consider it?" Aurelia said. "It's part of me."

"Yes, yes, but the question is where do you really begin? You are an artists' illusion. Do you know about pointillism?"

"Of course. Why did it take you people here so long to come to it? Why did you ever believe that there was anything else?"

"You are done in pointillism, you know, Aurelia. You are small points of light and colour, and you blend to solidity to the eye, at a middle distance. But close up you are not solid, and no one here will ever see you in a more clear form than just these points of light and colour. Yes, I know that we can all be atomized into mere points, but we don't all look like it. There is a discontinuity and incompleteness about you. You know that, don't you?"

"You don't sound quite like a Pan-Math or Science Boluxus," Aurelia said.

"Perhaps I am a Boluxus of Interior Science," Forcedmarch suggested.

"Oh, you are an anatomist?"

"I am that, but I do not mean that. It is part of a Chinese Box Puzzle. There is more than one sort of interior, and I'm not speaking of the anatomical sort. Perhaps I am speaking about the 'Interior Landscape.' Tell me about the landscapes of 'Shining World.' Are they well-defined, or are they pointillistic? Or better, show me. Here are paints and canvasses. I always carry this kit with me. I say to people 'Show Me' and I open the kit so that they can show me this way. Sometimes they do show me. Often it is the least expected of them who show me directly what they mean, with paint on canvas. Show me, Aurelia, the landscape where there might not be a sharp line between the interior and exterior scapes."

"Oh, I am a botcher," Aurelia said. "My botches will not give you a good idea of the landscape of 'Shining World.' You'd miss most of the landscapes anyhow. Your sense of smell isn't sharp enough to take them all in, and some of these aren't mineral paints at all. They are synthetic paints without authentic odour."

Nevertheless, Aurelia began to paint.

"They all love you instinctively," Forcedmarch said. "But many of them do not trust their instincts any more. They carry 'Kill Aurelia Now' signs because they believe that it is the solidarity thing to do. They feel that their whole way of life is threatened by you, and of course it is. Oh yes, they'll kill you, unless you slip away from here quickly and secretly. But they'll kill you from the feeling that it is their duty. They won't do it from real conviction."

Aurelia had finished the exterior-interior landscape of 'Shining World.'

"Oh, I see now," Forcedmarch said. "I see a lot of it. Yes, as it stands now they'll have to kill you. I wonder if you can complete the painting so that they won't have to?"

"No. I don't think so," Aurelia said. "And I still don't know what world this is. Is it Paravata? Is it Skokumchuck? Is it Gaea? Is it Bandicoot? It almost has to be one of the four. On one of them they killed the Prophets. On one of them they killed Joan. On one of them they will kill Beatrice. On the other—Oh I forget whom they will kill on the other, but there are four similar patterns."

"You are the 'Beatrician Moment,'" Forcedmarch said in admiration as Aurelia finished up her botched exterior-interior landscape as well as she could finish it.

"Who is the Beatrice that you talk about here, I want to know that?" she said.

"I thought it was the same one you mentioned, Aurelia."

"There are several of them. Tell me what world this one is and I might tell you about the Beatrices of this world. Tell me what world this is anyhow."

"It is a world with a wide and jagged psycho-gash between its exterior and interior landscapes. They are not linked so closely or purposively as are the landscapes in your beautiful botchery. You must flee at once, Aurelia."

"No. I will not flee at all. I was sent to govern. Is there no hope then? Will they tread me down?"

"Yes. It will be an unhungry generation that treads you down."

Aurelia was not a girl of a thousand faces, but perhaps she was a girl of a hundred or so. She had learned 'miming' at school, and she had played at miming. She could look pretty much like anyone she wished. And there was one incredible advantage as a mimic here on this world. The people could not smell body signatures or identities. So the hardest part of mimicry could be happily forgotten.

Aurelia studied a variety of girls and women outside, through a spy-glass, from the cabin of tycoon Rex Golightly. She settled on a dozen who seemed easiest to imitate and who were prominent in the milling and shrilling outside, either as vocal persons in the 'Kill Aurelia Now League' or as partisans of Aurelia.

Then, just as evening was coming on, she went out of the cabin, though no one was supposed to go out without a thorough examination. As a matter of fact she was bodily thrown out by the best bodyguard in the world, played by the Man of a Thousand Faces, Julio Cordovan.

"What, what?" Julio had cried in fury when he found her just inside one of the bolted doors. "You, you you! How did you get in? You've tried fifty different tricks to get in, you brat assassin. I don't care how you got in. I know how you will go out!" And the best bodyguard in the world threw her out.

Yes, Aurelia had been watching the brat assassin and her attempts to get into the cabin. She had learned her looks and her voice. So that was the first and easiest one of them to imitate. And Aurelia was thrown out into the 'Kill Aurelia Now League' just at gathering dusk. There was a weird texture to that mob. It was not exactly unfriendly, but it was murderous; there's a difference.

"You, Sheila-be-Damned," cried one of the ready-combat buckos when he saw her. "How did you get here? How did you get in there to be thrown out? You were clear down at the other end a minute ago."

"I told you I was fast. I told you I was tricky," Aurelia said in the strident voice of Sheila-be-Damned. (Wasn't it lucky that she had learned so easily the name that she would be travelling under for the moment?) "I told you that I could get inside. They threw me out, but I'll not stay out. I'll get in there again and again and again, till finally I fling Aurelia out to you."

"It's dull on the line, always a little dull here," the bucko said. "All we do is listen to our own talk, but yours is a little more exciting than most. There's not much action on a kill-line. Even the final action is done in a minute. But the centre of it is the communications, in that tent there. Do you know, Sheila-be-Damned, that we have got a million letters today, and nearly that many telegrams? These are statements of solidarity with the 'Kill Aurelia Now League,' and they are flooding in from all over the world. I love the feel of solidarity. The Kill-Blank-Now-Leagues have always got heavy solidarity-support from everywhere in the world. It gives you a real feeling of achievement to be part of it, even though we don't kill nearly enough people. And there aren't any new and good ways of killing. I always want to go to the end of the stick with them, and yet we repeat the same techniques over and over."

"How's about suicides," Aurelia suggested happily. "They are real end-of-the-stick things, aren't they?"

"Yes. They may be the best. When you can feel the frantic end coming to you in waves, it makes it all worthwhile. I like a smashing suicide. Leaps are the best. There is something electric about the long moment the leaper is in the air, and then the smashing, the smashing!"

"Oh luck, luck! If only we could have it happen!" Aurelia cried. "And perhaps we can. I will implant the idea myself. We may have just such luck."

"Sheila-be-Damned, there is something different about you," the bucko said, "Something that I like very much. It goes against the grain but I like it. Do you—"

But Sheila-be-Damned herself was approaching.

"Look there, look there!" Aurelia cried and pointed. The bucko looked. The real Sheila-be-Damned arrived with anger and amazement in her eyes. And then these looks were replaced by bewilderment. Aurelia had ceased to look like Sheila-be-Damned. Now she looked like one

of the other girls in the mob.

"Roxie!" Sheila-be-Damned said. "I thought that there was someone standing here who looked exactly like me. And now I see that it's you."

"I don't look anything like you," Aurelia-Roxie said. "Sheila-be-Damned, you shouldn't have more than one stick every half hour. You know how you see things that aren't there otherwise."

"It doesn't matter," Sheila-be-Damned said. "I'd just as soon see things that aren't there."

"What were you pointing at, Sheila-be-Damned?" the bucko asked. "I don't see anything special there. What did you mean when you pointed and said 'Look there, look there!'"

"I did not point. I did not say 'Look there, look there!'" Sheila-be-Damned said.

"Sheila-be-Damned, you did," the bucko said. "Roxie was right. You shouldn't have more than one stick every half hour."

But Roxie-Aurelia was off through the 'Kill Aurelia Now League' encampment. It was growing darker, and most of the mobsters were organizing dens, caves, and campfires. April second or third (whichever this evening was) was not really cold yet, but it is always cosy and conspiratorial to den into caves and to have fires snapping in the evening and night. And the foothills of these stunted mountains were full of caves. The luxury cabin of the tycoon faced directly onto these small mountains.

How does the coon feel when he sits down with a mute of hounds to discuss doing the coon to death? He feels pretty frisky if he has conned the dogs into thinking that he is a dog. Such a coon is top-dog for such time as he can keep the dogs conned. And Aurelia as Roxie was top-dog for as long as she could keep this coven of mobsters fooled. And, as a coon, Aurelia was a showboat. All coons are.

"What would we do with Aurelia if we had her now?" she asked, and she could hear the squeak of her own smirk.

"That is difficult to say," said one of the man-mobsters, struggling to find words. They were putting sycamore branches, from trees on a near creek-side, on the fire. "We should find some gadget for dispatching her so good that it would unjade us, but maybe she herself would be enough to do it. We love her, of course. She's magic. But we have to complete the love-hate dialectic."

"Why do we have to complete the dialectic?" Aurelia asked. "Why do we have to be on both sides of everything? Why do we have to do anything at all?"

"Because we have broken all the major compulsions," the man said, worrying his words a little bit, "so we must be chained to the minor compulsions. We cannot be free completely, or we would violate the freedom-slavery dialectic; and we can progress only by dialectics. We have freed ourselves from the slavery of fact, so now we must bind ourselves to the slavery of fetish. There's no other way."

"And yet we love Aurelia," a girl said. "That is why it will be so difficult for us to kill her, but we do not grow by easy tasks. We love her. She is the 'Shining Person,' the 'Bright Thing' from our mythology and our songs. She is the analogy of the 'Great Speckled Bird.'"

"But, as you will remember, the 'Death of the Great Speckled Bird' was a hit ten times as great as the original 'Great Speckled Bird' song itself."

"Isn't it all completely childish the way we carry on about this though?" Aurelia asked. "Do we have to be completely childish? Is there a premium on being silly?"

"No, it is not completely childish," one of them said. "It is part of the child-adult dialectic that we strive to fulfil. And it isn't completely silly. It is part of the dialectic of the silly—"

"Oh brother the dialectic!" Aurelia cried.

"Roxie, what are you saying?" several of them shrilled aghast. "You are attacking the dialectic itself, the only thing that matters."

"We love Aurelia," another of them said, "but when we force ourselves to love-hate her, we find it is not hard at all. Consider only her cruel treatment of Uncle Gifford Redwing, the scandal of the day. To tie the infamous Instrument Knot on him was shocking and unusually cruel, but we are not really opposed to such an agonizing and torturous thing as that. We enjoy the idea of it. But the fact is that she rejected his approaches, and so she has broken all the rules. No human should ever reject the approaches of any other human. We wonder if she knows what she has missed. The grosser the encounter the more powerful the experience, that's what we always say. With the flesh, it does not matter whether the experience is joyful or whether it is revolting. The main thing is that it should be powerful. Power and movement takes precedence over joy and pleasure. Powerful experience can be a joyless pleasure, really

the best kind. It is pleasure for its own sake, and not for the sake of joy.”

“We love Aurelia for being shinningly perfect,” another of them said. (These people in the fire-lit cave all seemed alike now, and there was no good trying to find a difference between them; there wasn’t any.) “And she achieves balance. Lest she be thought of as too perfect, we have the sublime and horrible discordancies of the horns of her ship that sounded when she came in. Oh, may they sound forever! Discord, discord, discord! So she fulfils the perfect-imperfect dialectic. And we would protect her with our lives. That is to say that we would not want anyone else to kill her; we want to kill her ourselves.”

“But the crux is this,” said another of them. “For two weeks now we have been entrapped into ‘Kill-Little-Name-Now’ effects, and they have not been satisfying. We have procured those two deaths, and they have been like ashes in our mouths and our spleens, like nothing at all. They have not satisfied us, and they have not left us hungry either. They have done nothing. There just is not enough satisfaction in hunting little-name persons to their deaths.

“And here is the rest of the trouble; there are hardly any big-name people left anywhere, and what there are left are unassailable. We *have* to have big-name people to kill, or we perish. Our pegs are tuned too tight on that and we can never back off from it.

“But the only new big name, absolutely the only new big name in the world, is Aurelia the ‘Shining Person’ from ‘Shining World.’ Her flame and fame have gone from the east even unto the west. We have to kill her. We need that joy.”

“We hope that she will understand that we have nothing personal against her,” another of the persons said. “But what offends us most of all is this whole idea of governorship. It is true that we have only third-hand reports of it, but we still reject the idea. Now here is the complication. We do want to be governed. We do *not* want to be patronized or pampered or favoured. We do not want apologetic persons to lick the dust before us. Of what use to us is licked dust? So we have at least an acceptance-rejection attitude towards governorship. And iron-handed and hobbled-booted governorship over us would be accepted easily enough. It is this gentle and implied governorship that gags us. It implies that somewhere there are persons superior to us; and they would oversee us, to some slight extent at least, without any thought of profit from us. We say ‘Death to all Lord and Lady Bountifuls.’ We have dined on meat too strong to be happy with such pastry. There are numenistic elements in such ‘guidance’ even if it is carried on by a single young person in the quietest manner possible.”

The mobsters had returned to the caves in more ways than one. They no longer looked at the world itself. All they looked at were a few flickering shadows on one of the interior walls of the world. Then the talk of the mobsters grew long hair on it.

They described, in their very hairy terms, the various deaths they would inflict on Aurelia, and it made her a little bit sick. Oh, by the red fire that crackled and popped in that cave, it did make her sick! There is much to be said against such explicit details. They threw all the mobsters into shaking and climaxing passion though. This was a powerful and moving thing to them.

Aurelia quietly went out of there and into another cave. In this other cave there was a sort of music brewing. It was music of the euphony-cacophony dialectic. The music was very, very loud. That was the whole essence of it. If it had been less loud, it would have deflated and disappeared. It would have shrunk to less than one howling quantum and it would have been heard no more. And the talk was very soft, slurred mumbles and voiceless whispers. Yet it could be heard well enough, coming through tunnels in the mountainous noise.

They motioned Aurelia-Roxie to drums. And she played them badly, but not badly enough. She felt that she was letting them down.

“We have solid, freeway music now,” one of the cave musicians said, his soft words running out of the mountain of noise like a spring that trickles out of a gravely mountain. “For centuries, music was trammelled by its own attributes. But now we have freed it of them, one by one, from the latest to the earliest. First we got rid of tunes. Really, a tune in an episode intruded into music where it never did belong. Tunes came very late, and they never were world-wide. The Orientals never had tunes, and the occidentals didn’t have them in their classical centuries.

“When we were freed of tunes, that false facade that had been built over the face of music, then we were able to see what other things we would be able to throw away. Very many other things, once thought necessary, were really not so. We got rid of melody then; we got rid of harmony, of pitch, of concord, of timbre, of rhythm, of consonance, of counterpoint, of polyphony.

"We insist on distortion. We have no use for the music of the spheres. Our is the music of the prolate ellipsoids."

They gave Aurelia-Roxie a lap-clavichord to play. She played it badly enough to get by, and yet they were disappointed in her. She should have been worse than that.

"Our monolithic and whanging music has influenced all the other arts," the soft-voiced cave-musician was saying. "While we have sheer masses of noise, the new painting has sheer and shouting extents of colour or of monotone. Sometimes the monotone will be piled up on the canvas a centimetre deep. As we have dispensed with almost everything in music, so the modern painters have dispensed with almost everything in painting."

"'Modern' doesn't mean anything, you know," Aurelia said. "How can a person say 'modern' and someone else not ask 'modern what?' Modern means 'in the mode of—,' but it has to be in the mode of something."

"No, it does not," the soft-talker said. "The whole point of 'modern' is that it has a dangling designation. Well, we have spread to the inter-arts also. When the Rock Island City Dump won first prize in the National Conglomerate Sculpture Competition, we knew that we were getting somewhere. But if one of the 'Beautify Our City Dump' committees had been to work there, and it had still won the Conglomerate Sculpture Competition, we would really know that we were getting somewhere. You know, Aurelia, that, though you came here to govern, the arts must remain completely ungoverned."

By what slip of the tongue had this person addressed Aurelia-Roxie as Aurelia?

"What is it that you, ah, that we actually seek in the arts?" Aurelia asked, still playing the lap-clavichord.

"Apathy," the soft-talker said. "Dynamic and power-mad apathy."

Why had that man called her Aurelia? Because it had come to him that she was Aurelia, and it was beginning to come to the others in the cave also.

"Do you hear footsteps, Aurelia?" soft-voice asked her through the din.

"Those coming to kill me, you mean? Yes, I hear them. But, curiously, I don't believe they'll arrive here tonight."

They gave Aurelia a French Horn to play. She played it as if it were seven horns, the seven howling and discordant horns of her space-ship, the horns that she had tuned herself. And the hackles began to rise on the necks of all of them then.

"She is Aurelia!" they called and howled. "No one except Aurelia could play the horn with such absolute dissonance. She is Aurelia disguised as Roxie." And they grabbed up burning torches from the deeper part of the cave and pursued her out into the night. This was murder set into motion.

"After her!" they cried to alert the whole apartment. "She is Aurelia disguised as Roxie. Catch her! Kill her!"

If you can't fight it, join it.

"After her, she is Aurelia disguised as Roxie," Aurelia-no-longer-disguised-as-Roxie called out. "After her! There! There!" It was Aurelia-disguised-as-Gabriella who was crying them along the false trail.

So Aurelia was out of that jam, but it had been close.

And then a sordid thing happened. The monsters caught Roxie, plain Roxie, Roxie undisguised as anybody else. And they killed her there. They killed her in very hairy style. They did it in many of the ways that had made Aurelia a little bit sick just to hear them described a little while before.

Aurelia slipped, in an Aunt Caladium disguise, back into the luxury cabin, and then she left off the disguise and was herself. But she was discouraged. People on this world were acting bestial, and Aurelia had at least a slight and temporary governorship of this world.

Meanwhile, in another part of the luxury cabin, the tycoon Rex Golightly was in a heated discussion with the best bodyguard in the world, the man who was travelling under the name of Marshal Straightstreet.

"I care as much for this Aurelia as I do for any of my own daughters," Rex was saying. "She is important to the world, and she is even more important to me. I will not have anything wrong happen to her at all. I will say to time itself 'Stand still and be searched till you convince me that you carry no harm to Aurelia.' How did she get out of the cabin?"

"I am investigating that now," the bodyguard said. "Also, where she is now, and whether she is in any deeper danger."

"It is mad country out there," Rex muttered. "There are half a million mad killers out there, all dedicated to her death. And they have acquired world-wide support. They have received a million letters and a million telegrams all affirming solidarity with their murderous position. And she is out there in that mad maelstrom. She must be saved at once."

"Be sensible, Rex," the bodyguard said. "There are not half a million mad killers out there. There are not one thousandth of that number. And they have not received a million letters and a million telegrams of support. Use your ears and eyes and brains, Rex. There are between two hundred and three hundred rather listless persons in that mob. And most of them have come out of curiosity. They have received nine letters and telegrams of support, all written in the same words. We have verified this. This is the truth; all the rest is media."

"They do not kill one death-marked person a week. A similarly-named group did kill one person about four years ago. And this group has killed one girl ten minutes ago, but she was not Aurelia. The murder was ghastly, of course, but the victim was not Aurelia, though somehow the mobsters thought that she was. We are to guard Aurelia only, not everyone in the world. Aurelia is in grave danger of her life, yes, but I believe the danger is not from these mobsters."

"But we are not even certain that she has left the house. I have concluded that she is a mimic (Aye, and she knows that I am one), and she many still be in the house in mimic-form-and-face disguises of any of the other young people. Neither of use knows all the young people in this house. I am not even sure whether it is better or worse if she *has* left the house. Her life-danger is at least as likely to be in this house as outside it."

"But yes, I recognize something now. She did go out of the house. I pitched what I thought was a female invader out of the house, pitched her out like a sack. There was something wrong with it then that I only realize now. The sack was too light for a normal young person. But Aurelia has very little weight. Her flesh and her bones are full of air. I threw her out of the house myself in my ignorance. What are you staring at, Rex Golightly? Oh, I see! I've been expecting him. It is the counterfeit."

What was standing there and gazing at them with balky anger was the duplicate of Marshal Straightstreet the best bodyguard in the world. There was no doubt that the two men were identical in every particular of appearance and bearing and dress.

"Is it the counterfeit, it is the counterfeit," said the first Marshal of the new arrival. "There are many marks by which a counterfeit may be known."

"No. The new arrival is the genuine one," Rex Golightly said. "Yes, there are many marks by which a counterfeit may be known, and I have been marking them on you, man. But I have been blind and did not really see what I saw. We will deal with you now, false man. That one, I have known his since college. You I have never seen till two days ago."

"You would have said that the last one was the genuine one in either case, Rex," the first Marshal Straightstreet said. "Actually, he does me a little better than I do myself. That is the one test of a counterfeit. He glosses over some of my flaws. What, can you not tell the difference between a primary and its cosmeticized shadow? I will play the shell game with that shadow, and you will not know which one is under which shell, Rex."

"You'll play no game, impostor," the second Marshal Straightstreet said. "I am here. You are finished. Now I'll thrash you within an inch of your life."

"—to coin a phrase," the first Marshal jeered. Then the second Marshal had him by the collar of his tunic and seemed indeed about to thrash him within an inch of his life. They went around and around. They were of equal strength, and each one countered with the other at every turn. Then they stood apart, facing each other, and glowering.

"One of you was right," Rex Golightly said then. "One of you said that he would play the shell game, and then I would not know which of you was which. Well, the game worked. I don't know which of you is which. I fooled myself when I thought that I could see the difference in you two."

"This damnable impostor is not that much like myself," the two Marshals said absolutely together. "Cannot you really tell the difference between us, Rex?" they asked absolutely simultaneously.

"There is the ordeal of the narrow room," Rex Golightly said. "It is a bloody and murderous ordeal, but I can think of no other. This room off here is a blind study. There is this one door to it, and this one only. There is no other door or window in it. There is no flue and no vent and no access in it. You two go into it now and settle this. In five minutes I want one of you to come out, and the other one not to be able to come out. The true Marshal

Straight-street, the Marshal I have known since college, will be the one who comes out. No man will overpower him or overtrick him. Go in now, the two of you, without a word. What happens will be taken care of without outside reference. If there is a dead body left over, well, this cabin has facilities to take care of that also."

The two Marshal Straightstreets went into the blind study room. Rex closed and locked the door after them with a big key. A bolt was heard to slide inside to lock the door from that side. Then a second bolt was heard to slide inside, doubly locking the door within. The second bolt was slid by a second hand. There was a subtle difference in the movement and power of the two hands. Then there was silence within.

Ten seconds of silence, and then there was pandemonium within. Shots were fired. Screams and oaths were uttered. Bodies and furniture crashed and shattered. There was moaning. There was screaming. There was a tearing of panelling strips from the wall and the banging of them as weapons. There was smoke and fire within surely. It was almost as if there was the booming of small cannon. And then there was silence in the room again, a silence that seemed to go on forever and which did go on for the final four and half minutes of the given five minutes. Then Rex Golightly unlocked the door from the outside.

One bar was heard to slide back on the inside. Then the other one. And Marshal Straightstreet walked out.

"Ah, it is yourself," Rex Golightly said in hearty greeting. "I'd have known you anywhere. How could I have doubted you for a minute? How could I have let the impostor confuse me at all? Let me see the other one. Is he dead?"

"What other one? What are you talking about, Rex?" asked the one and the only Marshal Straightstreet.

"The counterfeit bodyguard. The battered hulk, or the dead body."

"There is no such thing, Rex. You are having fantasies."

"Let me see," Rex said, and he went into the blind study. He examined it thoroughly for several minutes. There was no battered hulk there, and no dead body. The boards that he had heard being ripped out of the panelling had not been ripped out. There was no sign of furniture crashed or shattered. There wasn't a scratch or smudge on anything. There was no indication that there had been smoke or fire in there, no mark of shots having been fired. And it was almost certain that a small cannon had not been shot in there.

"What did you do with him, Marshal?" Rex Golightly asked. "And if you ask 'Do with who?' I will break your blooming neck."

"I made away with him, Rex," the best bodyguard in the world said. "Did you hear me? I said that I had made away with him. One of the Marshal Straightstreet's had the power to do this. The other one did not. I am the one who had that power. As to which was the true and which was the false Marshal Straightstreet, that question now melts of what would be a counterfeit if there were only one of it?"

"You had me almost convinced, Marshal," Rex said, "and now I might almost become unconvinced."

"He had me convinced completely," Aurelia said, "and now I am doubly convinced. It is always nice when one can have a complete and unflawed explanation of a thing."

"Aurelia, where were you?" Rex Golightly asked. "I was worried sick."

"I went for a walk," Aurelia said.

There was a spate of books about Aurelia for her third morning on this world. Some of them were hasty jobs thrown together. Some of them were highly subjective and went to soft facts. But there were a dozen or so with solid stuff in them, thoughtful and insightful. And there was something else; a review of ten of them in the *'Morning Review'* by the redoubtable Albert Derby.

1. *Aurelia is From Iowa—The Waterloo Revelations*, by Hawk-Eye the Reporter.
2. *Is Aurelia Saint Cecelia?* by the Board of Presidents of the *'Bad Music League.'*
3. *Aurelia as Little Eva and Goldilocks—A Study of the Golden Doll Archetype*, by Adrian Alte-Jung.
4. *How Well Does She Govern?—The Crux of the Matter*, by Charles Sinkman.
5. *Machiavelli and the Aurelian Ethos*, by Kirol Grabman.
6. *The Mathematics of the Aurelian Curve*, by Arthur Airim.
7. *All That Glitters Is Not Gold—The Underworld and Floating-World Connections of Aurelia*, by Jimmy Candor.
8. *How Human is Aurelia—Bird Bones and Basal Metabolism*, by 'Cipher.'
9. *Will It Ever Be Fun Again? The Aurelian Revival*, by the Board of Governors of Romp Publications.
10. *How Square Must We Be? The Implications of Acceptance and Humility*, by the 'Free Spirit Daily.'

1

Aurelia is From Iowa—The Waterloo Revelations, by Hawk-Eye the Reporter.

'Hawk-Eye The Reporter' is possibly a pseudonym, and there is very much that seems pseudonymous about this work. This is not to say that the evidence presented here by Hawk-Eye is false. The evidence, when checked out, will prove to be absolutely true and substantial, pressed down and running over, and of excessive measure. A cultured pearl may not be called a false pearl, and cultured evidence may not be called false evidence. This is cultured and cultivated evidence. It is real enough. It is the nature of reality itself that is challenged in things like these.

The irritation, the grain of sand introduced into the topo-oyster, may consist of a kind of personal animus, and it may be started as a premonitory or intuitive hunch. I suspect that the mechanism of it is obscure even to users of the device. A person is going to hate someone or something when that someone or something comes along. He will draw a bead on the phenomenon before it arrives, and he will blast it as soon as it shows its head. There is something unnatural and eldritch about all this, but it does happen. It is defamation, pre-empted and preordained. It is the tag 'Fake' posted proudly before it is known what the tag will be hooked to.

Hawk-Eye hints and then says out loud that killing would be almost too good for Aurelia if she should indeed prove to be an impostor. And then Hawk-Eye the Reporter does indeed 'prove' her to be just that. Oh, there is nothing wrong with the proof, except that it is cultivated before the fact. Must sets of facts be mutually exclusive?

In one way or another, each of these ten books contributes a fitted piece to the jig-saw puzzle titled *The Murder of Aurelia*. The pieces fit so closely, though each of them individually is jagged and uneven, that a knife-blade could not be inserted anywhere between any of them. And this is accidental—really it is. It is odd that 'The Murder of Aurelia' should already be a working title for this clutch of books, since Aurelia is a good and harmless girl. The piece contributed by 'Hawk-Eye the Reporter' is one of the largest.

'Hawk-Eye' shows or 'proves' that Aurelia is not from 'Shining World,' that she is not from off-world at all. She was born sixteen years ago in Waterloo, Iowa. Yes, and there are the pictures of her growing up right to the present time, and these were taken in Waterloo, Iowa

in the years they were said to be taken. Aurelia is one of the coming events that cast their shadow before her; part of her shade is her 'cultivated' shadow from Iowa. There are even her finger-prints in the Waterloo Registry Office, and they do check with the finger-prints of Aurelia taken by the Alien Entry Board two days ago. There are the several scars on an Iowa doctor's chart, there are the dental records, and they will check with those of Aurelia, *depend on that*. Everything, in fact, *will check too well*. It is proved without a shadow of a doubt that Aurelia comes from Waterloo, Iowa (she even played the French Horn, badly, in a junior-high-school band there), and consequently she does not come from 'Shining World.' Nevertheless, we believe that this over-documented thesis is false. The Iowa girl is an unconscious stand-in, and she cannot now be produced because she is supposed to be Aurelia, and there cannot be two of them. It is a case of artificial and unconscious 'doubling before the fact.' I feel that 'Hawk-Eye' himself is a double mind about this. He has written about 'Automatic Writing' before. Here he writes partly in Automatic Writing and Unconscious Writing. Now I believe that he has proof absolute that all this is true. And he had knowledge absolute that all this is false.

As to the fingerprints that do check, Aurelia had a curious statement *before the fact*, before anyone mentioned fingerprints or a double:

"On 'Shining World,' there are many persons who, by taking thought, can change their height and weight and appearance, can even change their fingerprints to any set of prints that happens to come into their minds. Yes, I am such a person."

It is very possible that Aurelia did change her fingerprints to a set that had just come into her mind when she was printed by the Alien Entry Board. It was only a touch of humour on her part. But how did the prints of the unconsciously and artificially planted Iowa double come into her mind? We don't know. 'Hawk-Eye the Reporter' is part of, or all of, a murderous conspiracy, but he may not be conscious of his involvement.

2

Is Aurelia Saint Cecelia? by the Board of Presidents of the 'Bad Music League.'

The *Bad Music League* is not a tongue-in-cheek group. It is a genuine tongue-in-the-bugle-mouthpiece organization, a high decibel confraternity of horners mostly, but also of string and keyboard and drum people. And we are not sure that it is entirely pseudo-scholarship that they put out.

Bad Music is a world of its own. This has been known for a long time. It had only a nodding acquaintance with other worlds. Above a certain intensity of sound, above a certain level of marshalling and heaping non-linear statements in either instrumentality or prose, above the plateau of multi-media meretricious mass, there is a world-area where there is no longer a distinction between the pseudo and the ortho. It cuts across worlds. And Aurelia of 'Shining World' belongs to it also, despite her statements of her own incompetence in music. The Board of Presidents of the *Bad Music League* belong to this cross-cut world and operate entirely in this world-area where all outer things are completely vindicated.

Unlike 'Hawk-Eye the Reporter' the author of the Waterloo Revelations, the authors of this book have no animus or hatred, unconscious or otherwise. Probably they love Aurelia, if there is any room for love in the high-decibel area above the meretricious mass of sound and sensation. They like her surely. The *Bad Music League* people wish to identify everyone with everyone else, to have it that all souls and personalities merge and are one whenever things reach sufficient altitude. So it is nothing for them to identify Aurelia with Saint Cecelia, with the Archangel Gabriel (a higher hornier if ever there was one!), with the black trombone player, now dead, known as 'Snow Goose,' with the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

They are on sound ground when they show that Saint Cecelia of the Trastevere Quarter (an inner-city girl) was not a string-player as formerly believed, but was a horn-lady all the way. And they are on sounding ground when they attempt to show that all horn players are one, just as all harpers are one, and all brass-beaters, all bell-ringers, all bellows-organists, all keyboarders, and all lutists are one. Thus there are only seven persons or souls in creation. Unmusical, especially un-bad-musical people, are not persons and do not have souls.

The people of the *Bad Music League* are transformed and almost transfixed by the discovery that 'Aurelia from the Stars' is a consummate bad-music artist right down their

alley, the only alley in the world for them.

The Presidents of the League make a plausible case for Aurelia, and they make a plausible case for bad music. Bad Music is loud and strong music with too many dimensions to fit it into the conventionality of things, they say. They deny the name of bad music to weak music that has no dimension at all. That is nothing! Let it drop out of the bottom of the world. But really bad music is transcendent. It is dimension-exploding.

More than anybody do the bad music people appreciate and welcome Aurelia. She is the Star who horned down from the sky. She is the Girl Next Door blown inside-out by the power of trumpets. She is transport! She is mountain-top! She is rhapsody!

But the Authors, the Board of Presidents, also state plainly that they would stretch her skin over a drum-head, or take the larynx from her throat and install it in the living throat of a bagpipe if that would bring stronger and more-dimensioned music. They have mutilated and killed and adapted, and they will do it again. They come on too strong for most of us. Bad Music is amoral.

3

Aurelia as Little Eva and Goldilocks—A Study of the Golden Doll Archetype, by Adrian Alte-Jung. Alte-Jung is a literary psychologist of distinction, but his area of distinction is always just a little bit over the edge. He has never been able to present a completely closed-circular theory of anything, but only sectors of theories. He has given us thirty and forty-five and sixty degree sectors of dangling-carrot themes, but never a complete and satisfying theory itself. He has been obsessed with archetypes, but all his archetypes are pieces-of-pie slices without full shape. He does not know this about himself.

Now he examines the Little Eva or Goldilocks Archetype which he himself believes to be flawed. He says that there is something the matter with the shape of it. Well, is he considering it complete, or is he considering only a pie-segment of it? He says that ninety percent of the people hate this archetype secretly, more than any other archetype.

He considers Aurelia to be a recent appearance of this archetype. He says that she, like others of this type, comes on too fast without real growth, so she and the type will always be excessive.

Well, why does curly-locks come on to so many people as a cloying discord? Because she is pushed, Alte-Jung says. Then she is rejected, and she falls into discord. And then she is pushed again. Why then, if she is an old player, does she not establish herself by persistence? Old players are almost always able to establish themselves if they have any quality at all. Ah, but she hadn't any quality, so says Alte-Jung who doesn't like her.

Who then is pushing her, if she is misfitted and without quality? Who is it who likes her, if the ninety percent of the people do not? God likes her, her type and her archetype. Chocolate-boxy, yes, and cutie-cute, yes. But He likes her. And what does that say about the taste of God? It says that God is without real taste; that is the conclusion of the psychologist Alte-Jung.

But Aurelia is not really like that. She has no curly-locks. She doesn't look much like either Little Eva or Goldilocks. Yes, she does. With your eyes closed she does. Her hair, though golden or probably brassy, is fine. But it is long and lank. There is no curl to it at all. Nor has she a simper, though Alte-Jung says that the archetype has a built-in simper. And Aurelia is not excessively saccharine.

She is with your eyes closed, Alte-Jung says.

Never mind that. Alte-Jung is correct in essentials. Aurelia does come on excessively sweet. And she is hasty. She will not be here long enough for the ambient to adjust to her. Alte-Jung says too little too stridently, but from the narrow sector that he gives us we can estimate the size and power of the rounding circle. We ourselves feel a slight excess in Aurelia, but we do not feel the angry rejection. And many persons do feel it as strongly as Alte-Jung does. They reject Aurelia to the point of murderous death. What healthy bully-boy has not wished to dash the golden doll to pieces.

With such inexplicable feelings against her, she will not live long upon this world. And, to put it in the form of one of her own impish questions "What world is this anyhow?"

How Well Does She Govern—The Crux of the Matter, by Charles Sinkman.

Sinkman is the only one of the authors who asks the question how we knew that Aurelia had arrived and how we knew that she was to 'govern' the world for a while. She was, after all, only a tow-haired, slight-bodied fourteen-year-old girl who came in (who knows from where?) with all horns blowing. She did not announce who she was, where she was from, or what she was supposed to do here. She immediately disappeared into a confusing group of people, and she was plucked out by a compromised tycoon. But there has not been given any information yet that she is anyone alien or special. She might well be, as one author has said, only a slightly-confused runaway girl from Iowa. No, she might not be any such thing, Sinkman says.

Sinkman believes that the knowledge of her, instantly, from the east unto the west, throughout the whole world, is a sort of credential of her right to govern. "People everywhere in the world have heard of her, but without ears; and read of her, but without print," Sinkman says. And he discusses how never-before-seen notables are recognized, and how they were even more often recognized in the past. He believes that there is such recognition on all the worlds. On ours, particularly in the pre-literate age, and now again as we enter the post-literate age, 'name people' are always recognized by the commoners who have seen no pictures of them and heard no description of them. Enough of Sinkman's point here, but Aurelia has been recognized everywhere in the world in these several days, and has been more readily recognized by the poor and ignorant than by the rich and sophisticated.

As to the performance of Aurelia as 'Governor of the World,' Sinkman builds scales and tables and diagrams to show the points of good government, and he considers more than a thousand instances of government on our own world. The highest rating that he gives to any of the governments is seventeen points out of a possible one hundred. To the governorship of Aurelia he gives thirteen points out of a possible one hundred. And yet thirteen points is better than the average ('An average that everyone in the world should be ashamed of,' Sinkman says), which average is only eight points out of a possible one hundred.

And Sinkman is of the opinion that Aurelia's governorship could work well if it had seven months in which to work instead of seven days. (How is Sinkman sure that Aurelia has only seven days in which to govern?)

He ascribes things to Aurelia's intent-of-governorship that are not apparent to everyone (not apparent to us the reviewer anyhow), though they may be apparent to the poor and ignorant. And he gives a resumé of what he says are Aurelia's aphorisms and governmental beliefs. These are in Sinkman's words and not in Aurelia's. He says that they are in the words that Aurelia would use if she lived a few weeks longer:

Happiness is the goal of mankind. This may be phrased in a higher way of divine service or dedication, but 'happiness' as a goal is always part of the stick, even if it is the smaller end. Understand that mankind may have a false goal as well as a true. But true happiness is the true goal of mankind.

Law is the Road-Map of Happiness.

Grace is the Gift of Happiness.

Justice is Happiness in society.

("These phrases have a this-worldly sound," Sinkman writes, "and I am sure that they have already been used by this-worldly writers. But perhaps they will serve as implicit translations of Aurelia's thoughts.")

I belong to the jot-and-tittle party. (This is Aurelia-presumed again.) I do believe in the law always. There are barely visible lines of the law that inscribe us wherever we are. They open to let us pass, or they hold firm and refuse to let us pass. No one is really ignorant of these lines. To break the lines is to break the law and to forfeit claim to happiness. There are four corners to every day, and the days are the pieces of each life. At each of the four corners of the day (midnight, six o'clock in the morning, noon, and six o'clock in the evening) one addressed the Father of Lights "Make us good. Make us happy. Keep us so." If we do not mark these four corners of every day, the days may

take an evil turning. In a world that is measured one day at a time, the omissions of these communications will be detrimental.

“I foresee that these simple statements, more than anything else, can lead to the death of Aurelia,” Sinkman writes, “even though she has not actually made these statements. The popular intuition will get these words from her as they are in her thoughts. And they run counter to what is perhaps the most rampant taboo on Earth. I have too vivid a premonition of the ‘Death of Aurelia’ because of the four-corners statements for there to be any possibility of it not happening.”

This is the sixth age of the world, as it is of every world, the long final age that may be longer than all the rest of them put together. Or it may end yet this night. Because it is the sixth age everywhere there is not much difference between the worlds.

A government should be nomadic, but everything else should remain in its ordained place. The longing of people to overthrow governments applies only to sessile governments. There is no way and no inclination to overthrow a moving government. Instead of saying “How can we get rid of it?” the people will say “when will it be coming around again?” The medieval kings and their courts were usually migratory. (Were there medieval kings and their courts on this world? What world is this anyhow?) They followed the circuit-ride of governorship as it is correct that they should. And they brought the news and the impregnating interchanges to the people, things of very delicate adjustment. This was on the principle of the fewest number of moving parts making the most efficient machine. But, in the present time and world, the media have pre-empted the royal prerogative of carrying the news. This makes for debasement of news and the entry of falsehood. People move out of guilt, or in search of something. But let them find what they search for and they will no longer wander; for one place is very like another. Let the people stay in their places, and the whole pageant of the world will pass before them in orderly fashion.

The present “forms” of civilizations are generally the correct ones. They need but to be poured full wherever their level falls. Beware of those who propose new forms! Be wary of communities in place of families, of urban-rural conglomerates in place of towns, of peer-group pensions in place of homes, or exurbinae in place of neighbourhoods, of alpha males in place of fathers. And do not multiply the making of jugs when so many fine old jugs stand empty.

Sinkman believes in mind-reading journalism, and he insists that he can pretty well read Aurelia’s or anyone else’s mind. We will see in several days whether she really thinks like that or talks like that.

Much of Sinkman’s appraisals are in the forms of mathematical tables. We are not certain that his reading of Aurelia’s mind is this correct, particularly when he has never seen her and refuses to visit this area to remedy that. “I see her internally,” he says. And he writes a mixture of sense and doubtful sense.

“Such governorships have had good effect in the past. I have made a shaggy graph (which I will not show in this story) showing what our world-level would be without these irregular, light-touch visitations from ‘Shining World,’ from ‘Dark Companion,’ and from Delphinia. It’s a bad level without them.

“And yet even a light-touch intervention has a bad aspect. The ‘Shining World’ people make us feel as if we were token people only. That is why we cannot accept anything from them and why we must do violence to their gifts.”

And Sinkman says that there is a certain horror going through the world now because we fell strangely compelled to kill Aurelia. And we don’t want to do it.

the reader to save his money and not buy this. Oh, I notice that it is a no-charge book put out free by the Kirol Grabman Foundation. And now I remember other books that have been given free by the Kirol Grabman Foundation. Is poison a bargain just because it is free? I will not review this book.

6

The Mathematics of the Aurelian Curve, by Arthur Airim.

Airim, charlatan or genius or both, opens and then closes the curtains capriciously in this study that is by turns fascinating and frustrating. Airim writes himself into some contradictions here, and he escapes from them by some of the darkest obfuscations ever. His mathematics is as easy or as difficult as he wishes to make it. It is with his mathematics that he opens and closes the curtains.

But he defends himself from charges that his interpretations and predictions are on the level with astrology and palmistry and lost continentism and dynamic analysis and visiting astronautism. "Aurelia is a visiting astronaut, yes," he writes, "but everything about her is on a higher level than visiting astronautism." But he does not really prove that he can read character and predict fate and lives by his analytical mathematics.

Airim says that his 'hypo-psychic character interpretations' are no more than analytical geometry applied to the real world and the persons in it. As to the geometrical curve of the Aurelia person, Airim believes that it has an invisible counterpart to every segment of it. But just what is the invisible counterpart of a geometric curve? Airim admits that he doesn't understand it, but he is certain it is there.

Well, there *are* invisible depths to the mathematics here. There are a few unexpected sea-serpents in those depths, but it's mostly murk there. Airim says that Aurelia will work a light trauma on the whole world. But a sharper thing that he says is that "The Salient and outstanding characteristic of the Aurelia curve is that it terminates so suddenly." And he makes it sound sinister the way he says it.

This is for students of the various new analytic geometries and other analytics, but not for everyone.

7

All That Glitters is Not Gold—The Underworld and The Floating-World Connections of Aurelia, by Jimmy Candor.

To scarifying reporter Jimmy Candor we own such nomenclature as 'dynamic apathy,' 'creative loitering,' 'dark-sides advocacy,' 'precursor reporting,' 'macho cookery,' 'constructive defamation,' 'diatonic intercourse,' 'compassionate hatred.' *All That Glitters* is perhaps compassionate hatred, and it may be constructive defamation. That it is defamation there is no doubt.

Jimmy Candor has a hyper-flatulent python, a circumcised chimpanzee, an hermaphroditic ocelot, and a Sicilian donkey that has received a human heart transplant. He has a rubber razor that cuts by supersonics. He uses his supersonic razor extensively in this book.

Condor states that Aurelia had made unerring contact with criminals and super-criminals at every turn since she came here, and has made contact with no other sorts of people whatever. Her first contact was with an escaped convict whom she murdered, and there are hints of a long connection between them. Then there were the two professional highway-looters posing as tow-truck operators; two supposed rodeo wranglers, but the grass they transport isn't for their horses' mouths; a gang of young 'with-it' criminals; a number of persons of a murder-rite religious sect; international super-Mafia persons Karl Talion, Blaise Genet, Julio Cordovan, Helen Staircase ("How did it just *happen* that these four notorious criminals were all together in the vicinity of Aurelia's 'landing' when not two of them had ever been on the same continent at the same time before?"); then there were the two diabolists Herr Boch and the Prince of Nysa. And after that, and still dominating the front

stage, was the tall tycoon Rex Golightly who is possibly the most evil man in the world. And at the Golightly residence 'Potlach' there has been a veritable parade of crime leaders, the scum of the earth coming from all over the world to see Aurelia. There have been criminal mathematicians and speculative philosophers and raw-grabmen, but criminals all. So maintains Candor.

Observers at the landing site say that Aurelia slighted Jimmy Candor and news-female Susan Pishcala and thought them funny, and that is the reason for Candor's animosity. Candor says that he has no animosity, but only concern for the earth which is under strange and criminal attack and perhaps is being eaten up by a female cancer. He promises clarification in the second volume of *All That Glitters* that should be published later today, and in the third volume that will be published tomorrow.

Candor ends the volume with an appeal to 'constructive murder' in the brave words "It is expedient that one person die for the multitude. I finger that person now—Aurelia!"

8

How Human is Aurelia?—Bird Bones and Basal Metabolism, by 'Cipher.'

According to 'Cipher,' some people say that Aurelia is the most graceful person they have ever seen; others say that she is the most awkward they have ever seen. Well, she does have a movement and bearing that is unusual and has ever been called inhuman.

Aurelia is light weight, but this isn't because she comes from a heavy-gravity planet; she doesn't. She has a very slow heartbeat, but she has all the characteristics of a person with a very rapid heart-beat. Her temperature (amazing, amazing!) varies between 22°C and 44°C and she is able to control it. "Why, changing it is as easy as standing up or sitting down," she says, "and I am sure that you could control your own temperature with very little practice." Her bones, according to a Jefferson's Fluoroscope, are hollow and full of air. And her very flesh is aerated.

She gives people electric shocks when they touch her, and the young men say that it is a pleasant sort of shocking. She commonly glows in the dark, and it makes an exciting sort of fire-dance when she walks at night. But she can go dark when she wants to—"just turn my electric skin-charge inside out, that's all," she says. And it is her electric skin, her body aura, which is the only part of her that is ever seen, that is the basis for her amazing mimicry. "I just stack it and sculpture it however I wish," she said. "You do it too, but you don't see your own auras so you are ignorant of your doing it. But you people, when you fall into either an accidental or a purposive group, tend to look like each other, and every group takes in a 'group look.' You don't see it, but sometimes the camera sees it."

People seldom remember Aurelia's exact words, so 'Cipher' says, and a sound-track of her conversations may vary impossibly every time it is played. Aurelia does not speak in *exact words*. She speaks in thoughts wrapped very loosely in words, and the wrapping is variable. As was the case on Pentecost morning, everybody hears in his own tongue.

Aurelia can call on amazing reserves for temporarily increased strength, speed, endurance, apperception, intelligence, intuition, artistic performance, and charismatic show. "I can be three times as smart,—," she says, "for about three minutes, and then I run out of wind."

Is she human? 'Cipher' asks it. Yes, he says, she is a member of the 'wide-definition human race.' Is she of an archaic branch of the 'wide definitions' then? Quite the contrary.

She is of a younger human race, perhaps the youngest of them all, an exploding variation that in its sudden mutation may not be more than twelve generations old. She is the latest thing in human people. She is 'Tomorrow's Child.' Look at her! Your own great, great, great grand-children may look like her, but you do not.

But Aurelia may not have offspring. On her own 'Shining World' she failed the course 'First Essays in Marriage and Reproduction.' She says she will try it again sometime when she isn't nervous, but probably she isn't meant to survive. She is what biologists call a 'Terminal specimen,' and biologists can tell.

Will It Ever Be Fun Again?—The Aurelian Revival, by the Board of Governors of *Romp Publications*.

The book *Will It Ever Be Fun Again?* is fun at least. Sunspots and constellations, cosmic cycles and happiness moments! It is fun! We wash our hands in joy as we drink from the fun fountain when coming onto this. Blue Birds and Roses!—did anyone ever see things going so right? The new ‘fun days’ are part of the Aurelian Effect or the Aurelian Revival, so the Board of Governors of *Romp Publications* says.

Why call it a revival? Because, while there has been perhaps a lot of significance in recent decades on this world, there hasn’t been a lot of fun. And yet people remember, or think that they remember, or at least have a nostalgia for, the Grand and Funny Days and Year when things really were fun. Those days and years are not to be found on the calendars, perhaps, but they are found in another part of annals.

Well, what was it that was so much fun in those days, whether those days were fictionalized or not? It was just the rolling along that was fun, so a survey by *Romp Publications* says. It was sing alongs, it was dance alongs, it was talk alongs, it was walk alongs, it was play ball alongs and swim alongs, it was picnic alongs. And sometimes it was just sit in the glider alongs or sit by the fire alongs. It was stay up late alongs, it was hit tune of the day alongs. It was walk in grace alongs, it was go to the show alongs, it was horseback riding alongs. It was even argue philosophy and theology alongs and raise a family alongs. It was people coming through with a bang. Jokes from then aren’t too funny now, but they were completely funny then. There was a shattering immediacy and a delight of recognition. It was just a glow that came upon certain times and places and gave the feeling: “It’s fun now.”

The coming of Aurelia had brought such a glow. This is all the more odd since not one person in a million had yet seen or heard Aurelia, or had had any experience with her at all. But many more of them *will* see and hear and experience her, and half of that pleasure is its anticipation. And Aurelia will be out among them in intense and funful ways later today, or tomorrow anyhow.

Aurelia appears in almost every comic strip in the world this morning. All the top tunes of the morning are Aurelia-type horn tunes. There is a growing spate of ‘Little Aurelia’ jokes —“She’s only an oculist’s daughter, but two glasses and she makes a spectacle of herself.” Sure they’re funny jokes, if you belong to the Aurelia Fun Festival.

‘Aurelia Ballet’ was to be found everywhere in the latter part of last night and this morning. It is a sort of story-telling dancing. It has sprung out of the ground suddenly. It is like old silent-movie or silent-radio sequences, except that it is accompanied by mountainous noise, the horns of the howling canyons and the wind-bags of Aeolus. It is more fun than Square-Dancing or Round-Dancing. It’s a form of the Dance-Opera, of the Hootenanny.

People say that they will see Aurelia more today and tomorrow, that she will take to the roads and hills and meadows. She is a peripatetic phenomenon, they say, and peripatetics are always fun.

Well, is she is a peripatetic, why doesn’t she move? She will.

The sad thing about this is that the people haven’t had much fun for fifty years now. But this week they are having fun again, ‘New-Wine Fun.’ It will be only disputed fun for seven days, the prophets say, but it’s more than we were having before.

This is all very mysterious, and the Board of Governors of *Romp Publications* make the comment “What is more fun than a good mystery?” Aurelia is a good mystery, and much else. Even the new and pertinent saying of the prophets “The generation is responsible for all the Blood of the Prophets spilled since the beginning of the World” is funny, and it calls up a mental cartoon of the Prophet Aurelia spilling a great crockful of blood on the carpet and saying “They made me do it.”

Even the coming death of Aurelia is fun in its way. There is a spate of “Aurelia’s Wake” stories going around that are really funny.

The musical scores in this book are well done.

Free Spirit Daily.

“There is the saying that the craven people beg and the upright people steal, and the completely empty people accept mutely,” so begin the Editors of *Free Spirit Daily* in their new book *How Square Must We Be?* In this, *Free Spirit Daily* stands at the opposite pole to *The Movement For The Return of Squareness And The Acceptance of Free Gifts*. And there is always the statement that the last freedom is the ‘Freedom to be Truculent’ about a situation.

“We will not accept even implicit government from either Aurelia or her shadow,” they write. “On the whole, we would more readily accept it from the shadow. The shadow offers us fewer insulting enticements. And he offers us a bleak front that we can more easily relate to. But we say ‘No’ to the shadow, and we say ‘Ten-Times No’ to Aurelia.

“We fulminate, yes. And fulminations do not have to have a clear target. Today we fulminate against an unclear target, the Aurelian skip-glitter.

“It may be that other worlds could accept such light-hearted governorships without a qualm and without feeling compromised. Well, we cannot. We have lost too much of ourselves along the way to allow to be torn down that little wall where we can turn to bay. We have lost our honour and our honesty, our purity and our seamliness. We have kept swine in our body-temples, and we have befouled our own nests. We have lost our taste, and we have even given up the arrogance of our bragging tastelessness. We have been the partisans of every popular dishonesty and the enemy of every unpopular truth. We have *made* the one to be popular and the other to be unpopular.

“We are cheap-shooters. We are cowards. We know these things. But we will not be ultimate cowards unless we let them take that little wall down, the wall that (in final straits) we stand with our backs to. We are mockers. We are mutilators. And we will, in this case, be murderers. We go from temporal to eternal humiliation, but there must be the possibility of a moment in between when we can avail ourselves of free refusal.

“In the further day, we will be able to say “Yes, we knew Aurelia, and we refused her. She was here, she is here, we still have her brittle bones in our earth. And we will be able to dig up and show those bones.”

How Square Must We Be? shows that, whatever else has gone out of the world, truculence has not gone.

These ten books together comprise a representative sample of the current thinking on the Aurelian Manifestation. They are worth an hour’s reading.

Albert Derby, Reviewer

The greatest bodyguard and detective in the world, who was either or both Julio Cordovan and Marshal Straightstreet, began to seize and interrogate the suspects of the kidnapping and murder of Aurelia. No, the account does not get ahead of itself. There hadn't been any such kidnapping or murder yet.

"The best time to investigate a murder is *before* it happens," the famous bodyguard insisted. "After it has taken place, it is in most ways too late to do anything about it." The bodyguard seized most of the suspects by force or by at least a slight show of force. He had almost all the force he would need.

"I have placed a small army at your disposal, Marshal," Rex Golightly the tycoon said, "and I could increase it to a large army if that would do any good. But hurry with your interviews and questioning, or else be ready to conduct them after we are on the move. Aurelia wants to begin her peripateticus now. So we're about to take the house down."

"It would be easier to guard her if she remained here and the house remained here."

"I'm not sure that it would be, Marshal. There's dark corners in this house that can never be lighted. We'll take it apart today and pack it away, dark corners and all. And we'll assemble it again tonight, and the dark corners will be there again. There's every opportunity for murder in the dark corners of my house. And there are certain unfolding safety-factors on the open road. Do as well as you can, Marshal. Guard her life. That's the thing. And do not interfere with her freedom. That's the other part of the thing."

The first, and almost the last person that the famous bodyguard attempted to interrogate was Cousin Clotie, the grubby teenager who was usually in that hundred room luxury cabin of Rex Golightly the tycoon. The bodyguard said that he would have some answers out of Cousin Clotie, and Cousin Clotie said that he would answer or refuse to answer as he felt like it.

The bodyguard laid his strong hand on Cousin Clotie's shoulder, and then he was struck by lightning. He was felled, he suffered a bolt of electrifying agony, and the hair on his head was set on fire and the soles of his shoes smoked.

"Oh, that's the way it is," the bodyguard said. "You are more than I thought."

"That's the way it is," Cousin Clotie said. "Yes, I am more than you thought." But he was still a grubby teenager of apparent bad manners. He popped his teeth at the bodyguard, or perhaps that was a sort of smile. "I will probably answer anything you have the wit to ask," he said. "You want to protect Aurelia, and of course I want to protect her also. Besides myself, I am more concerned for her than for anyone on this world. And I intend to protect her, subject to other things that I intend more to do. Bodyguard, you do not know what is going on, and I do."

"Clotie," said the bodyguard rising from the floor and finding himself blistered and burned in many places. "You followed Aurelia here, I know that. How far did you follow her?"

"Not far at all. A few parsecs."

"Oh, then you *are* the 'Dark Counterpart.' "

"It's an inaccurate name, but there isn't any accurate one that you'd understand."

"Why did you follow her here?"

"To govern here. We do the meaningful governing. We slip in under the bright distraction of the 'Shining People' and do the work that they think they are doing."

"Then, for every child who goes out to govern from 'Shining World' there is one of you—ah—children from what I might call 'Counterpoint World.' "

"Not quite. One of us for every two or three of them sometimes. When one of them seems most in need of help, we go to give them help. We do the work while the helpless one provides us a bright cover to work under."

"Why do you come? Why do you govern?"

"Oh, duty, things like that."

"You don't give the impression of caring for either compassion or duty or any other good thing."

"No, I suppose that I don't. I did badly in 'Impressions' in school. I'm supposed to be unobtrusive. And we have to design, each one of us, our own unobtrusiveness. I make myself to be distasteful and beneath notice, and so I do my work. The children from 'Shining World' are rejected because the people find themselves liking them too much. We are rejected because the people don't like us at all. But we work on them while they ignore us."

"Did you kill young Uncle Silas?"

"No. Or maybe yes. Is 'kill' the word for it? I think that he had already been dead for a long while when I first noticed him. You can use the theory that Uncle Silas was killed because he was mistaken for me by the 'hit man' who had some such instructions as 'The weirdest teenager in the house,' he will be the one. Kill him! Nobody would suspect that there might be two such weird teenagers as myself and Uncle Silas in the same house. You can use this theory. It may help to keep you occupied. And for all you will know it might be a true theory."

"No, people wouldn't suspect that there were two such extreme ones as you."

"And nobody would suspect that both of us were persons on very important assignments, though disguised as persons of no importance at all."

"Uncle Silas was a person on an important assignment? Incredible. But then he might have been killed for himself."

"No. Hold to the first theory that he was killed for me. His importance wasn't guessed."

"You are being very devious about something, Cousin Clootie. What is it?"

"I want you to protect me also. I don't want to die."

"And the one who wanted to kill you is still in the house? And he still may kill you? Or he may kill Aurelia?"

"All these things are possible. If you will worry about them, then I will cease doing it. I hate duplication."

"I will worry about them," the bodyguard said. "It is my job to worry about them. Are you also going on a peripateticus, as Rex calls it, when Aurelia goes?"

"Yes. Today. And that is all the questions that I will answer, Mr. Bodyguard."

"But I would like to know—"

"Black lightning of which you felt only a sample, man! Black lightning to burn you to a cinder!" Cousin Clootie the Dark Counterpart said. And then Cousin Clootie walked away with his awkward shamble.

The bodyguard was almost convinced for a moment there, for a most narrow moment. And then the absurdity of it all overwhelmed him. That grubby teenager never came from space. He could not govern. He could not do anything at all. He was a moron. He was a revolting caricature of even a very dirty teenager. He was less than nothing.

And yet he had talked persuasively for a moment there, considering that he was an oaf who could hardly talk at all.

The bodyguard went to the River Boat. He sat down there with Karl Talion, Blaise Genet, and Helen Staircase. There were face-down cards on the table in front of them, but they were not playing. The blind man Michael Strogoff also sat at their table, playing by himself with blank cards and with one Golden-Aurelia value-card.

"Hello Julio," big Karl Talion said with a strong lack of cordiality.

"He isn't Julio Cordovan," Helen Staircase said positively of the bodyguard. "Julio could do a lot of faces well, and his own perfectly. This man can't."

"What do any of you know about the death of Aurelia?" the bodyguard asked.

There was a short pause then.

"Not a flicker, Julio," Karl Talion mocked. "Not even a flicker from nervous Blaise. You're a bungler, Julio. It hasn't happened, of course. Those who are attuned to the fates say that it won't happen for three days yet."

"Whatever intentions any of you have about Aurelia, forget them," the bodyguard said. Herr Boch and the Prince of Nysa sat at a nearby table. It was the middle of the night.

"We are here to watch Aurelia, and we will continue to watch her, Julio," Blaise Genet said. "Will you interdict our watching?"

"Yes, I will," the bodyguard said. "I will interdict anything that could possibly harm her. One of you may have a Basilisk Eye or an otherwise baleful eye that could harm. You are vultures here. Vultures, be gone!"

"No, I'll not be gone," Karl Talion said. "If you are not Julio, what did you do with him?"

What happened to Julio Cordovan?"

"Oh, I swallowed him," the bodyguard said. "Yes, he's all in me. In as much as there ever was a Julio Cordovan I am still that person."

"No. You're someone else," Helen Staircase said.

"I was always someone else," the bodyguard maintained, "but I'm also the only Julio there ever was. You three, Karl and Blaise and Helen, are representatives of three different powers on three different continents. Each of you wants to kidnap Aurelia for your realm and put her through the juicer for your own country. You'd press all the information and value out of her. It won't happen."

"We *four*, you Julio, and Karl and Helen and myself, are representatives of *four* different countries on *four* different continents," Blaise Genet said. "Three of us do not want to use Aurelia and do not want anyone else to use her either. We want to maintain the balance, though she may not be weighty enough to tip it at all. The fourth of us, you Julio, are the least trusted of us. We don't know what you want to do. Your thousand faces won't disguise the fact that you've always been a two-faced sneak. You have Aurelia, or your two-hands-in-one-glove partner tycoon Rex Golightly has her. But we will not allow you to use her or to have her any longer. It comes too steep for you now, Julio."

"He isn't Julio," Helen Staircase said again.

"Ah, I'll shuffle them, and then we'll play death-banter brag," the bodyguard said. "Does everybody have plenty of blood? We play 'brag' and 'bluff' as surrogates for our countries, for it is dangerous for countries to play these games."

"We'll not play with you," Karl Talion said. "Touch one card and you lose a hand. Blaise and Helen and I will draw cards from our down-piles as soon as you leave."

"What will you draw for?" the bodyguard asked.

"To see which one of us will dispatch you, Julio," Blaise Genet said.

"Except that he isn't Julio," Helen Staircase put in again. "But there is no harm in dispatching him anyhow."

"Someone is knocking at your door, Blaise," the bodyguard said, "but he can't get in and you can't get out. You've waited too long."

The bodyguard left the three of them and blind Strogoff. He went and sat with Herr Boch and the Prince of Nysa at their table.

"Does either of you know anything about the death of Aurelia?" he asked them.

"That it has not happened, but that it will happen, unless someone prevents it," Herr Boch said.

"Unless someone more competent than yourself prevents it, bodyguard," the Prince said.

"Why are you two interested in Aurelia?" the bodyguard asked gruffly.

"We aren't," the bodyguard answered. "We sit here, and we mind our own business. We have not shown any interest in her at all. We have not asked anyone any questions about her."

"You *are* interested in her," the bodyguard said. "One of you came here from the Germanies, and the other of you from Little Asia. You were here waiting, a half mile from where she was to land, when no one could have known that she would land on this world."

"So were you," Herr Boch said. "No one could have known that she would land here, and she knew it least of all. And yet everyone of moment knew all about it in advance. Myself, I want artefacts from 'Shining World.' I am an art dealer and I deal high. My Antikenladen, my exquisite shop and emporium, is the most exclusive and the most expensive in the world. I want artefacts in line with my style, breath-taking articles for which I can ask millions."

"And I want to seduce her," the Prince of Nysa said.

"Not really you don't," the bodyguard countered. "You are past that for many years, old prince. And you must know that she's alien."

"Consider some of them that I've had," the Prince said. "They were really alien. Ariadne was already dead before I first had her. It was a good, but creepy, relationship that we had. Carya, she was always turning into a walnut tree, and indeed she had a walnut tree in her lineage. Talk about a woman with wooden responses! Erigone belonged to the 'Lesser Dog Star Clan,' and she came from one of the planets of the Lesser Dog Star. And Leucippe turned into a screech-owl."

"But I know about the peripateticus, bodyguard, and it is there that I intend to serve Aurelia. I'm an expert in the field. I know about parades and pageants, where the principal goes humble and barefoot and the princely retainers follow with every luxury that she needs."

I will form just before dawn, with trumpets and bugles yet! I know about such retinues. I myself had some that were the talk of the world."

"There must not be any harm come to Aurelia," the bodyguard said.

"None," the Prince of Nysa agreed, "except her death, and that will not be till three days hence. It is fated and cannot be prevented."

"I'll prevent it," the bodyguard maintained. "Your horns are coming back, Herr Boch. And what is that blue powder around the base of them?"

At the near table, Helen Staircase had drawn low card from her down-pile. She would be the one to dispatch the bodyguard, to have him opened up first to see whether Julio Cordovan was in him in any form, and then to kill what was left of the guard.

"It's Blue Caustic," said Herr Boch. "It is used on cattle after they are dehorned. It prevents new growth of core-matter. I used it on myself for years, but I will not use it during the peripateticus. I'll let the horns grow then, and my horns can grow a lot in three days. In future times, when this is all retold and portrayed, I as well as the Prince of Nysa will become an attribute of Aurelia. Yes, I too know about retinues, and about pilgrimages, and the coursings of people."

"Statistically, Aurelia is already dead," the Prince of Nysa said. "She was the weakest member of a seven-flight from 'Shining World,' and the 'Shining Worlders' expect to lose an average of one on every flight. This is the weeding out of their weak ones that keeps them strong and shining."

The bodyguard left them and left the River Boat. He went and talked to the two horse-wranglers who had intended to be on their way to the next rodeo long since and who were now caught in the Aurelia-net that was upon the neighbourhood.

The guard talked to the two tow-truck operators who now had Aurelia's space ship in their keeping. He talked to the multi-media 'with-it' people. He talked to the sectaries of the millennial sort. He talked to the leaders of the 'Kill Aurelia Now League.' He talked with power and threat to all these groups. They all knew that Aurelia was not dead. They all knew that she would die one way or another in three days' time, and that her death was inevitable. The guard disputed this with them.

Meanwhile, it was beginning to dawn.

Back at the luxury cabin of the tycoon Rex Golightly, Aurelia came out and stood on the parapet of the highest tower of the whole cabin. The golden dawn caught her and made her into a shining wonder.

"Leaps are the best!" one of the 'Kill Aurelia Now' buckos had said to her the other night. "There is something electric about the long moment the leaper is in the air. And then the smashing, the smashing!"

"Oh luck, luck! If only we could have it happen!" the disguised and devious Aurelia had said then. "And perhaps we can. I will implant the idea myself, and we may have just such luck."

They had both been standing and looking up at the highest turret of Golightly's cabin and marvelling how wonderful it would be if someone would leap off it to death. Now Aurelia was posed up on that same turret, standing and teetering on the parapet of it. It was an electric moment indeed, and people gathered breathing electric breaths and hoping to see the leap.

"Jump, jump, jump!" they called, and others took up the cadence 'Jump, jump, jump!' People came from the hills and the lake and from all the luxury cabins around there. The 'with-it' people came, and the sectarians, and all of the 'Kill Aurelia Now League.' Even the strong partisans of Aurelia were caught up in the moment and cried "Jump, jump, jump!"

Aurelia jumped.

She leapt out into the golden air, and she plummeted the thirty meters to the ground, a modified plummet, for she had her own style. And would she have her own style in death also? There is something electric about the long moment when the leaper is in the air. In the case of Aurelia, there was something doubly electric about it, and something triply long. It wasn't that time stood still. It was that Aurelia fell slower than other persons would.

For she came down light and easy. Barefoot and easy, she came down softly. There had never been much weight to her. By the bird-bones of her and her aerated flesh, she did make a soft landing! Then she laughed and ran, and the people followed her. Her peripateticus had begun.

The Nomad King, The Tall Tycoon had already begun to strike his house, his prefab module tent. Most of it had been taken down already, all except the front wall and a few supporting rooms and that tall turret. Then, as almost all eyes and feet followed Aurelia, those parts were taken down also.

The bodyguard, finishing with one part of his assignment of threatening people, had been returning to the luxury cabin when he had seen, at a great distance, Aurelia leap off the tower. And then he had seen her land softly and run off.

He returned hurriedly to the luxury cabin. But it wasn't there. The last few of the rooms were just rolling off on their wheeled undercarriages.

"Rex did say something about this, and I wasn't paying attention," the guard mumbled. "But where could the great building have gone? It must be up ahead of these remaining little pieces of it. When one works for a Nomad King, one must expect to strike his tent many times in a season.

The moving pageant carried a many-levelled retinue along with it. Aurelia's space ship, about thirty meters in the air and with all its horns blowing, was led along by a rope by one of the tow-truck men. Boys in balloons ascended to it and travelled along with it, talking to it, and getting bantering recorded answers. Birds, tooters, hawks, king birds, grackle, black birds, all followed along in crowds as the cavalcade made its bright way along the lake shore.

It was a parade. It doesn't take much to start a parade, but it takes something. It doesn't take much to start a rain, but that takes something too: silver-iodine crystals will do it sometimes; temperature inversion will do it sometimes; clouds overrunning hot standing air will often do it; anything to coalesce on. Well, Aurelia was silver-iodine crystals, she was temperature inversion, she was clouds running over hot standing air, she was something to coalesce on. She started a parade.

She started a walkabout, a march, a trek, a trudge, a schola, a forum ambulatory, a walking chataquah, a circuit-court, an ambling assize, a concourse, a migration, a pilgrimage, a fanfare, a saunter, a journey, an ambulation. Gautama and Aristotle, Brabant and Hedge-Row Michael all liked to give instructions of the walkabout, and was Aurelia less than they? This was a 'government ambulatory,' the kind of governing that Aurelia most liked.

People joined the cavalcade from the camps of the 'with-its,' the millennials, even from the 'Kill Aurelia Now' Nation. People came from all the little towns on the lake: Cut-Bait Cove, Black Crook Town, Silky's Landing, White Water City, Dokey's Dock. The lines were humming, and soon people would arrive from Tahlequah and Pryor and Big Cabin and T-Town itself.

Even the fish followed along the shore of the lakes, after the ground parties. And Rex Golightly, the tall tycoon who was also a Nomad King, talked to them as he walked at the tails of his rolling tent-carriers.

"I know you as old oasis fish," Rex said. "What are you doing in this lake here?"

"We don't know you," said a fish spokesman. "Not in those dude clothes we don't."

"Yes, you know me," Rex said. "We've met and talked on the date-palm circuit at half of the water-holes of the world. I am a nomad king as well as a tall tycoon. Now I am worried about a ward of mine that I have in my care. You have always told me the truth, even when the stars and the palms of my own hands lied to me. This ward of mine, I will not have anything wrong happen to her. I'd like her to live forever, or as near to that as we can come."

"Then she *will* live forever, or for three days, whichever comes first," a second fish told tall Rex. "That's as near to it as we can come."

Rex Golightly talked to fish. At one time, when his life had depended on his getting correct information, he got all his information from the fish of the oasis circuit. And it was sound information. But it was held against his reputation that he talked to fish.

One hour of walking, and then all members of the *Journey-Judicial* stopped and sat in a circle on the ground. And just how many persons can sit in one circle and converse with each other intimately? Seven, ten, twelve, eighteen? Oh, many more than that.

Fifty, a hundred, three hundred? Oh, many more than that also. More than that in an *intimate* circle? Yes, more than that. Above five thousand. That's about right.

For more than five thousand persons you might have to form two circles, to keep things intimate. But Aurelia's circle was just at five thousand persons. That made a close group when they sat down on the grass four times a day by the side of the lake. Without an attracting centre, this would have been too many persons for an intimate circle. But Aurelia (nobody knows why) was a successful and attracting centre.

Well then, what do you feed that many people, barley-loaves and fishes?

"That would be possible, of course," the Prince of Nysa said (he was serving as commissary), "but, since we have more means, we may as well have more variety." The means were provided by Rex Golightly and others of the kingly crowd. The expertise in these things was provided by Herr Bock and the Prince of Nysa. They had had very much and very long experience in catering to large professional crowds of devotees. Yes, and in being catered to. The Prince was a recognized expert in ancient Greek and Asian affairs. Herr Boch had been

seneschal in charge of moving royal courts of the middle ages. And Rex Golightly, who was both a tycoon and a nomad king, was an expert on hospitality of every sort. He had insisted that this ambling court of Aurelia should bear the name of his rolling, hundred-room cabin Potlatch.

The stops of the large and intimate party by the lakeside were not ordinary stops. They were ritual joys with ancient earth celebrations grafted onto a 'Shining World' Mystery Play. They had old elements of the Agrionia, of the Dionysia, of the Lenaea or new-wine feast, of the Anthesteria or flower festival. And at nightfall would come something very like the Greater Dionysia.

There were grapes. You can't have too many grapes. Where do you get so many grapes in April? Oh, they are provided by the caterers. And there are the attributes, the *nebris* or panther-skin, the fox skins, the she-bear skins. "You can't tell the notables without a skin-card," someone said. There were masked persons, Sabazius the horned serpent, Silenei with small brow-horns, and there were fluvial characters in general.

The pertinent constellations were seen in the sky in the bright daylight; the Hyades, the Waggoner, Virgo. Ivy, laurel, grape vine, olive branches were strewn and carried. There were ritual piles of horns of cattle and buffalo and rams, and there were boar-tusk trumpets that counted for horns. Arrows and darts (Aurelia herself was the personification of the arrow). There was another retinue following them. And the bodyguard Julio-Marshall disliked this happening.

"The first stop of the day always has an irregular feel," said the Prince of Nysa who had become a sort of master-of-ceremonies of the whole walking court. "Some persons will have eaten very early before setting out. And others do not regularly eat breakfast. Nevertheless, it is time for *lentaculum*. Let the cock crow!"

FIRST IENTACULUM

"But the cock has already crowed," the chicken lady said. "He is stubborn, and he will not crow again till tomorrow."

"I know a way to make the cock crow," the Prince of Nysa said, and he started towards it. He did not have to demonstrate. The terrified cock crew for the early *Ientaculum* breakfast, and five thousand persons ate it in a circle on the grass.

Many horned creatures had been travelling along with them, and they stopped with the people there, Long-Horn Cattle from the show-herd of the Randy Rex Ranch, Buffalo from the Big Bluestem Ranch, Santa Gertrudis Cattle from the Cow-Town Corrals. Goats and sheep too. This was breakfast time, but it was also a 'judgment day morning' which was announced as such by trumpets. So Aurelia, in her role and office of Governor of the World, would hear cases while she and all of them ate.

There was salt-bread dipped in either wine or honey. Some like it one way, some another. And some had never tried it before and went by delicious guesswork. Dates, olives, goat-milk, eggs, cheese. Grapes, roast duck, white wine, melon. Oat-cakes, roast pork, walnuts. Ram roast, cider, frumenty, apples, barley-bread. Wood-cock, morning bread, red wine. About the same as you have for breakfast at home, but it tastes better in the open.

Herr Boch and the Prince of Nysa and other knowledgeable persons went among the sitting crowd and told the people to show their joy and wit and variety—"so that when Aurelia asks, as she will ask, 'Which world is this anyhow?,' we can answer 'All of them.'"

There is no way of remembering the law cases that Aurelia heard (a sort of privacy and impediment was placed upon them, though they were heard publicly), but there were very many of the cases (impossibly many for the time allotted), and the decisions were given with incomparable wisdom as well as with joy and verve.

Oh, there were joker cases, of course, and one 'joker execution' in which a man who had received a death sentence, but in jest, had thought that he was dead indeed, and was rather angry when it turned out that he was still alive and the object of merriment. But all were not cases of litigation. Some were just cases of persons coming to Aurelia with hard or tricky questions, and some were persons who only wanted to touch her, and to find out what the 'electric feel' of her was. And sometimes there were slip-ups and plain misunderstandings.

"Do you believe in the yin-yang principle," a surly young woman asked Aurelia.

"No I don't," Aurelia answered plainly. "I have no use at all for any of those asymmetrical yo-yos, least of all for the yin-yang. I don't think they should even be allowed in the same

tournaments with regular yo-yos. But the matter is of very small importance.”

“The yin-yang principle takes death-vengeance on those who believe it to be of very small importance,” the surly woman said. Well, Aurelia had been taught on ‘Shining World’ that there were limits to this business of suffering fools gracefully.

“What we have here is a little girl playing at Courts-and-Governments,” said George Clavicle who was a Forensic Reporter with *World International Press*. “Is this really the way that a world should be governed, Aurelia?”

“I shouldn’t wonder if it were,” she said. “I do hate an over-governed world, and I believe that the only courts should be circuit-courts. If a person is too old or short-winded to catch a circuit-court, he should forget about litigation entirely. I myself am giving an example of a circuit-court, but not a very good one because gaudiness creeps in on account of my being a stranger here and having picked up flush protectors. The best government is that which has to govern hardly at all, which grows rusty with disuse. And yet there should be an oil-can and a can of ‘Bust Rust’ at hand always, and also a large hammer to break rusted joints loose. Over-governing causes care and canker which eat people up. People cannot afford to be careful or there will be time for nothing else in the world. You remember the saying ‘If you can’t be careful, be good.’ The main thing is to be good and carefree. Say, this world isn’t Hound Dog Hulk by any imperial accident, is it?”

“No, Aurelia, I can state categorically that this world is not Hound Dog Hulk,” Clavicle said firmly. “But the real question is not which world this is as which world *you* come from, for the pseudonym ‘Shining World’ is like a sunbeam or like quicksilver: it is difficult to nail down. Do you come from Skokumchuck? Or Gaea? Or Yellow Dog? Or Bandicoot? Or Sireneca? Or Hellpepper Planet? Or Dobson’s World? Or Hokey Planet, or Aphthonica, or Horners’ Corner, or Sad Dog Planet, or Gelotopolia? Our own world-locators are almost certain that ‘Shining World’ is one of those twelve.”

“But those twelve are all among the ‘most likelies’ for being *this* world,” Aurelia insisted. “And we ourselves may not identify ‘Shining World’ with any of the popular names or chart names. We have to throw all those nicknames back into the hat unread. There is an inhibition placed on us in this respect.”

“Possibly on us also,” said George Clavicle.

“Wouldn’t it be funny if I myself did come from Skokumchuck or Gaea or Bandicoot or Yellow Dog?” Aurelia mused. “Who would the joke be on then?”

The sun was shining brightly and things should be rolling.

“Everybody up!” Aurelia cried loudly. “Be ready to resume the journey while I give a Cock-Crow Insight-of-the-Morning from Fat Tom the Sage of the Middle Worlds:

Happiness is both the key and the goal. Every human action must have a goal, or it will not be a human action. The “Object of Desire” is always the Human Goal, but there are false objects and false goals. The goal is not wealth or power or pleasure or well-being or even knowledge. The goal is happiness, which is the true object of desire, and this goal can only be attained by ordered and deliberate will. We do not go to the ticket office and say that we want a ticket to “It-doesn’t-matter-where.” We want a ticket to “It-does-matter-where.”

There are both internal and external seducers to draw us from the rational goal of happiness. We rightly treat these two classes of seducers in the same way, by refusing to be seduced by them. The “Final Happiness” is neither outside nor inside, but outside-and-above. One name for this “outside-and above” final happiness is “The Universal Good.” Do you know that your words on this world are like sticks that break and will not bend, that are incredibly stiff? Please try to correct this in your words. That we may see this universal good now only through a glass darkly is not a real objection. That is better than not seeing it at all. It is infinitely better to have a sometimes difficult goal than not to have any goal. And there is a peculiar advantage about the final happiness goal. Once gained, it can never be lost.

But it is said “It cannot be had by natural powers alone.” That does not matter since, for the asking, we can be given “more-than-natural” powers. There really is a fair road that can be followed out, and the name of it is “Present or Imperfect Happiness.” Oh porcupines! In your words, that sounds like grammatical tenses! The means of reaching the goal are simple, distinctive, and proper to every human being. “They are a family

heritage that can be claimed only on the grounds of human blood.” Deliberate control is the root of it, and the human ability to choose is essential.

“The Repulsiveness of Ignorance”—now that is a phrase that is not a sentence for the reason that there can be no predicate to the “Repulsiveness of Ignorance.” But it is an obstacle to lesser people, and once we were blocked by it we become lesser people.

Cock-Crow thoughts are the brightest of the day, but their dazzle sometimes compels their continuance to a shadier time. The cock-crow sun gets in the eyes. We will continue this at the second corner of the day.

The retinue was moving again. Several thousand persons dropped out of it, and several thousand others joined. Those who dropped out of it did not necessarily do so completely. There was an announcement that Station KEY would carry the Four Corners of the Day, Cock-Crow, Noon, Evening, Night, as a public service. Many persons had to return to their work, but they would follow the high-lights of the Aurelian cavalcade on the broadcasts.

FIRST PRANDIUM

Persons came to Aurelia and asked if it should not be possible to schedule the meaningful periods of her cavalcade so that they would not conflict with the meaningful periods of her ‘Dark Counterpart.’ Aurelia said that this would not be possible since she intended to keep the ‘freedom within wide limits’ schedule for her own activities. And anyhow it would not be possible for anyone to attend on both herself and her ‘Dark Counterpart’ in their corresponding stages because they didn’t have any corresponding stages. Part of the difficulty, she said, was that she did not admit that she had a ‘Dark Counterpart.’

But the one whom people were calling her ‘Dark Counterpart’ was Cousin Clotie.

In reality, there wasn’t much that could be said against Cousin Clotie, except that he was ratty and grubby, and he seemed to take a dark and gloomy look at things, and that he had been wrapped in a hasty mantle of evil. Aurelia would not speak a word against him, though she had a graded series of frowns that she used whenever he was mentioned.

Cousin Clotie had a retinue of his own? That group was his? It followed on that of Aurelia, and camped only a quarter of a mile or so off from it, so that the fringes of the two encampments mingled a little bit. But how did Cousin Clotie get into this act anyhow? And how did he get even half of five thousand followers?

Well, anyone who has the boldness to go after it can get a retinue of such size. There was plenty of ground that Aurelia left uncovered, and Cousin Clotie covered it with great seriousness. But he said things that were a little bit coarse, and saddening, and despondent. And some of them may have been untrue.

“You should have him followed around by a truth squad,” someone told Aurelia.

“Oh, he says that he’s the truth squad for me,” Aurelia answered. “I suppose that he is. I get carried away sometimes. And I drop bones, and he picks them up and gnaws them. He says that I leave too much meat on them. But he isn’t my ‘Dark Counterpart,’ and he can’t be from a ‘Dark Companion’ world to ‘Shining World.’ There isn’t any such. I don’t know what world he comes from. But then I’ve been convinced that I don’t know the real name of the world that I come from, or that of the world that I’m on now. So I’m not in a very firm position. No, no, I would not like to comment on the ethics of Cousin Clotie. He says that I don’t have governorship over him. He even says that I don’t have sole governorship over this world.”

April mornings out of doors are pleasant, and cool enough. And many persons had begun to accrete to Aurelia’s cavalcade. There were carnival types who rolled along in show vans, and the hucksters and fawny men of them made offers of merchandise and opportunities to the pilgrims of Aurelia. Aurelia herself bought a Hyperborean wrist watch. It was not presently in running order, but the man said that it would begin to run whenever the wind shifted to the north. It ran by the power of the north wind, the man said, and it was always accurate when the north wind was blowing. Aurelia also bought ten gimcrack rings, one for each finger.

Then, when it had arrived at noontime, within the ‘freedom of wide limits’ schedule, the Cavalcade stopped for Prandium. The carnival hangers-on set up all their lighter booths and shows and rides. But they did not set up the big Ferris wheel, not for just a noontime stop.

Aurelia went to one fortune teller's booth and was told that she would die in the dark hours after cena of the third night of the journey. But this fortune teller told her many things that could not possibly be true at all. She went to a second fortune teller. It was the same here, the prediction of Aurelia's death, and the plainly false information about almost everything else.

She went to the third fortune teller, one who used a large crystal ball that clouded and cleared and showed very changing scenes. But this sibyl told Aurelia a number of things that were true. She told her the names of the other six members of her seven-flight from 'Shining World.' She told her the names of her mother and her father and of the living horse that she had made, the one that couldn't be guided. She told her of the horrible blunders she had made in her classes at school, some of them so bad that no one would be unkind enough to remember them; but now the recollection of them came to Aurelia like tinkling sunshine. And the sibyl told her, and also showed her in the crystal ball, the landscape of Aurelia's own fantasy land into which no one else had ever entered.

"Can you tell me the name of this world?" Aurelia asked. "Surely many persons here could tell it to me without using second sight or trickery. But they won't."

"I can't, but the crystal ball can," the sibyl said. "Put your ear to the ball and it will whisper it. Real names are not supposed to be spoken out loud."

Aurelia put her ear to the crystal ball and it whispered the name of the world they were on.

"Really?" Aurelia breathed in some amazement.

"Really," the crystal ball whispered.

"Now can you tell me another name, or the common name of the world that *I* come from?" Aurelia asked. She put her ear to the crystal ball and it whispered the name to her.

"Oh but there is confusion then," Aurelia protested. "As 'Shining World' we have a good name, where we do not have the name of being legendary. But as to this name—ah—we have a compromised name then, inasmuch as people do not *hope* that we are legendary. How about it, Globe?" And she put her ear to the crystal globe again.

"Yes, there's confusion and duplicity about your world's name," the globe whispered.

"Now can you tell me when I will die?" Aurelia asked the sibyl. "Several others have told me that it will be after the third night cena."

"No, we have no information on that at all," the sibyl said. "I don't believe that the others had any information either." So Aurelia left that wise woman.

For Prandium, the meal at approximately noon, the cavalcade formed into a circle of five thousand persons on the grass by the lake-shore. They had bread, fish, fowl, meat, hot wine-and-water. And they had mulsum.

"What is it anyhow?" Aurelia asked. "I've never read of anything quite like it anywhere in the 'Catalog and Customs of the Most Likely Worlds.'"

"We drank it anciently," said the Prince of Nysa, "and we will drink it now. Only the Cavalcades of the really royal will have it, or even know about it. It's honey wine, but of a special honey, the same as we used in ambrosia. The Olympians used it."

"The Olympians? You are saying that there were Olympians on this world too?"

"Yes. Sort of a Road-Show version of them, Aurelia."

"Will Cousin Clootie have this honey-wine in his encampment?"

"No, he will not," the Prince said. "His isn't a royal encampment."

"Send him a jug," Aurelia said.

"That isn't fitting," the Prince protested. "Unless it is a command of yours."

"It is," Aurelia said. So Cousin Clootie had a gift of the rare honey-wine. Then someone came to Aurelia and said that the last one of the sibyls wanted her to come to her booth immediately, that it was very important. Aurelia went.

The sibyl, the one who had given all the correct information, was crying very unprofessionally. "A scene has appeared in the globe," she said. "It is a horrible scene but I am afraid that it is true. Oh that you who are so bright and good should die from the double dart!"

Aurelia looked into the crystal ball and saw herself dead. She could look at herself in large or in small, in her landscape setting, or in minute details. She saw that she had been killed by an ugly sort of double dart. She saw the watch on her wrist. The north wind was blowing violently inside the crystal ball, and the Hyperborean watch on her wrist showed that it was after cena-hour of the third night.

But people must be about and doing. Noontime does not last forever.

“Everybody up!” Aurelia cried loudly. “Make ready to resume the journey while I continue with the noontime portion of the Insight-of-the-day:

First, to put it all into context, it is unnatural or supernatural that we should exist at all. In all reason, we should not be. The odds against it are terrifying. Nothing should be. All the evidence for us being here contradicts elementary reason. And everything that exists is such evidence. Let us never forget that existence itself is the longest shot that was ever booted home.

On the talk of the will and the intellect then. The will of itself is blind but it has aptitudes and powers. The intellect is powerless. The two of them together are able to give orderly movement, which is human movement. To the extent that we ever indulge in disorderly movement, we are not human. But ‘orderly’ does not mean what some of you think it means, and it surely is not the same thing as ‘serious.’ We should not be always, or ever, serious. What a wobbly word ‘serious’ is anyhow! But we must be ordered, whether seriously or unseriously, in whatever we do.

There are half-lies which deny either intellect or will to men. There are total lies which deny them both. On many worlds, today is the day of the total lie. There are many very smart people who deny both will and intellect to themselves and who swear that they get along better without them. But they are not ordered people, and so they leave off being human. To be human is to have both will and intellect. And to have them is to be a component of the Reign of Law.

Most declared revolts against authority are really revolts against authenticity. It is an error to believe that we can revolt against morality by revolting against authority. Morality is no more based on authority than it is based on the colour green. Morality is the directing of an act towards a natural object. Immorality is misdirecting an act. Authority is merely a device under which human affairs are more workable, and it has no necessary connection with morality. Dispute my authority at your peril though!

There is a double standard to morality, yes. Rational acts correspond to a good standard. Irrational acts correspond to a bad standard. It’s that simple.

But if it is all that simple, then why is there weeping in the night? I may tell you why there is. Perhaps this evening I will tell you, or perhaps tomorrow. Or I may leave it to Cousin Clotie to tell you.

FIRST MERENDA

There were prodigies all that afternoon. Not only were the constellations to be seen in the very bright afternoon sky; not only did the birds bark and hoot; but the fish talked to Rex Golightly the tycoon.

It was only by private device that the fish talked to Rex and he to them. Actually he was talking to the fluvial and oceanic components of himself rather than to fish, but some of his components exteriorized themselves rather starkly. Then how did other people hear the fish talking to Rex if it was done by private device? Oh, other people possess private devices also.

It was not only that there was horn music without visible horns that afternoon. There was a primary musical invention made there that afternoon; it had to do with horn music from both visible and invisible horns, a new sort of syncopation; it was something that had never been done before. But besides all these prodigies there was the prodigy of the monkey.

This was the monkey that ran up and down the dangling ladder from Aurelia's space ship to herself, bringing her data and assurances. But the hanging ladder used by the monkey was invisible, though it was very rope-like as it blew in the wind and buffeted the monkey. And there was something very wrong with the monkey.

"You made him yourself, didn't you?" a handsome and neatly-bearded young man asked Aurelia shyly. This young man was riding on a speckled mule of unusual liveliness. "I'm Marco Rixthaler," the young man said. "I am the son of the eminent Melchior Rixthaler."

"Yes, I made the monkey myself," Aurelia said. "And your speckled mule, you didn't make him yourself. You wanted to, but you couldn't. But he thinks that you did."

"Yes, he's a brain-washed mule and he believes that I made him. And he almost outdoes himself in obeying unusual commands to prove that he is a high mechanism and not a low organism. He made himself spotted on command, you see. I don't know how he did it, but he sweats a lot of mule sweat over the problem. I would give almost anything if I had an insight into the high science of 'Shining World.' I long to make living animals as you do, to make them to my own designs."

"Oh, I'll show you how," Aurelia said, "if only there is time. If there is a fourth day to the journey, then I'll show you how, and then you can make all sorts of things. And you can make them better than I do. Do you know that I made a horse once, or at least a steed, and I forgot to make a way to steer it?"

"Yes, that's one of the anecdotes in the 'New Aurelia Joke Book,' " Marco said. "Oh yes, I see. The monkey, yes. One could make these things much better than you make them, if only he knew how to make them at all. There's a lot wrong with this monkey you made."

Well yes, Aurelia had made this monkey badly, but it would serve well. It was really an instrument, a tool to shuttle things down from the hovering space ship to Aurelia; and to carry messages back to the ship. It was a mechano-organo. It was very monkey-like in its appearance and movements. But, as Marco said, there was a lot wrong with it.

Aurelia noticed of the assured young Marco that his hands were trembling. He was bashful with her. She would know the symptoms on any world.

"I'd give a kingdom to kiss you," said young Marco with that nervousness often seen in young boys on the boondocks-type worlds.

"Do you have a kingdom?" Aurelia asked him reasonably.

"I'm heir to a kingdom" Marco said. "But you are from 'Shining World' so you are too far above me."

"Aw haystacks!" Aurelia said. "No such thing. See that little side-show wagon there that's rolling along with the entourage? See one of its many signs 'Buy a ticket for a dollar and kiss the girl of your choice.' It means kiss the carnival girl of your choice, but it doesn't say so. Now canter over there on your speckled mule and buy a ticket. Then come back and kiss me. I never kissed a boy on a speckled mule before."

Marco Rixthaler cantered over and bought a hundred tickets from the carnival wagon, for he was a rich boy. He was also a very nice boy, not forward like so many on this world. What was this world anyhow? Well, the crystal ball had whispered a name for it to Aurelia, but she wasn't convinced. Marco Rixthaler used up half of the tickets. Then Aurelia told him to wait till evening with the rest of them.

Several intelligent men spoke about the Aurelia phenomenon that afternoon. They treated it in a very spacious manner. One of them was Melchior Rixthaler the father of young Marco. One of them was Rex Golightly the tycoon and nomad king. One of them was Gaspar Grootgrondbezitter. Rex Golightly had been the magus of hospitality last night and for several nights. Rixthaler would be the magus tonight. Grootgrondbezitter would be the hospitality magus tomorrow night. These things will explain themselves soon.

"It is hard to take that little girl from Skokumchuck seriously," Gaspar said. "There is a purity of concept about her and her soul, but pure concepts are presently on the wane. She's real enough, I suppose, and she seems to be just what she represents herself to be: a school girl on assignment for 'World Government Class.'"

"Are you sure she's from Skokumchuck?" Rex Golightly asked. "I tried to find out and I couldn't."

"She's from a Skokumchuck-type world, at least," Gaspar said.

"Well, so are we, for that matter," Melchior Rixthaler put in. "This is a Skokumchuck-type world, though we tend to forget it. Yes, the girl believes that she is a school girl on a school assignment, but what if she is something other? Suppose that she is a programmed and mind-stuffed arrow or bomb shot into the midst of us."

"What for?" Golightly asked. "There are easier ways to blow us up, and there are easier ways to spy on us. But what if she is an infection? There wouldn't even have to be any malice about sending her. It's an always-present danger."

"What kind of an infection?" Gaspar asked.

"Oh, some sort of moral infection, I suppose. We are never immune to a new strain of moral infection. A new slant on an old idea could throw us clear out of balance. It could sweep our whole world in sudden epidemic. We have, at best, a most tenuous balance with the principalities and invisible empires. If one of the 'moral untimates' becomes epidemic here, then we go completely unpredictable. All our care and making-sure would be for nothing. Aurelia herself speaks of 'control,' but we have our own sort of control and we don't want it pre-empted by some random moral epidemic. And then there's the other end of the dart. There could be a violent reaction to Aurelia's 'final happiness' thesis. It could be a horned-animal reaction that would not recognize any control at all.

"There is such an air of assurance about the whole business as to suggest that 'Shining World' may be distinctly superior to our world in some ways. There has been a balance. Of the dozens of 'Worlds of Possibilities' in our class, we are one and the poorly-identified 'Shining World' is another. We do not even have the bearings of some of the worlds. We know them only by implications, and yet we do know minute things about them. But one of them must not get too far ahead of the others. One must not really send out real governors to the others. If it is all in fun, all right then. But there is the feel of power somewhere behind it all. If so, then we must find a way to circumvent that power before it becomes unwieldy."

"Golightly, it's the best kept secret that some of us here are distinctly superior in some other ways," Melchior said. "On our own acres, we will not soon be bested. There had been a levelling on 'Shining World,' that everyone on that world should be capable of doing every job on that world. But we will not be levelled, so the best of us will remain above the level of them. We also send out the feel of power, and they may have sent this scanning sunbeam of a girl to examine it. We will watch what we can lift from them. We will watch how we can profit from every effort that they put out. But we will not worry about it, for worry unbalances the judgments."

"She's so small a thing," said Gaspar, "that we must not worry about her effect. She's a long quantum below the threat-threshold. So we will love her (that is automatic for us of the inner group who have our distinct superiority), and we will give her gifts. Gift-giving is what we do best of all."

Aurelia herself came to those pleasant kings then.

"There will have to be a magus-pavilion raised for the use of Cousin Cloutie also," she

said. "Not for himself, but because he is a governor. One of you must provide it tonight, and the several nights following."

"Do you insist on that, Aurelia?" Gaspar asked with a twinkle.

"Yes, I do."

"Well, I guess I'll have to provide it then. But Magus-pavilions aren't that easily erected."

"Yes, they are," Aurelia contradicted. "We erected one when we were only in the third grade, and we were just little kids then."

Aurelia said that she would like for Marco to meet her mother, but she didn't know how soon that could be done.

Then it was late-middle-afternoon, a little too late (for the first day of scheduling is subject to errors,) and they camped for the Merenda meal which would be brief. There was hot and cold duck, amber-coloured wine, Macedonian pickles, fallow-deer baked, apples and crab-apples, five heavy steers spitted whole, cider, millet bread, hazel nuts, imperial whiskey. And there was carrying-on for half an hour (Station KEY said that they must have at least a half hour of carrying-on for their broadcast.)

And then—"Everybody up!" Aurelia cried loudly. "Make ready to resume the journey while I give you the third-corner-of-the-day portion of the daily insight:

Passion is the opposite of action. Yes, of course it is. Why do you all look at me as if I didn't know what I was talking about? The passive is the opposite of the active. When a thing becomes passionate enough it will die of sensual as well as intellectual inaction. However, because there is on this world a tendency to use "passion" to mean the opposite of itself, to mean "motion" or even "emotion," I will play along with that silliness. So when I say "passion" I will mean "emotion" or even "unbridled emotion." It is for the hardness of your hearts that I do this.

But the unbridled is always the unhuman, and it always denotes less rather than more virility. And yet, in most cases that I have seen around here, the bridling makes no difference at all. Things never get that far. The whole emphasis has to be in whipping some sort of life, any sort of life, into things. It isn't the question of the "Risen Beast" in you. It's the beast that can hardly be roused even to wakefulness. Yes, I am talking about this poor world and its poor people, a world where the people become a little bit hysterical with the fear that they will not be found "passionate." And yet you make idols of the "passions" that you possess so thinly. Whatever for? I heard a while ago that there might be a "horned-animal reaction" to my insights-of-the-day. I don't believe it is possible.

And the "passion," the emotions that are spoken of as psychic powerhouses what do they generate? One of the emotions, love, is the cause of almost everything we do. But there are other things and games that borrow and use that name, so that makes confusion. But love is indeed a powerhouse in the pursuit of happiness, for love is a sort of premonition or paragon of final happiness.

What I am trying to get you to do is to govern yourselves more, so I will get by with governing you less. I am lazy in this. Strong passions are more easily governed than are weak passions, just as a three-foot-long steel sword can be more deftly and swordfully manipulated than can be a three-foot-long piece of spaghetti.

Right along here, but only in this one place, am I at a little bit of a disadvantage in lecturing to you. I am only fourteen years old, and on 'Shining World' we don't experience the deeper emotions till we are fifteen.

FIRST CENA

"Your murderer is surely in our company, Aurelia," Marshal-Julio the famous bodyguard said. "But it is difficult to sift one of a dozen out of five thousand persons. Do you have a hint?"

"Not the least. And I believe that the murderer, if there is one, has not yet selected himself from the mob. If I were following Aurelia though, and biding my time, I would not hide in her own camp but in the neighbouring crowd. They're quite close."

"Yes, yes, that's possible," Marshal-Julio said. "Aurelia, did you ever wonder how your shadow moves and acts *when you're not there*? When I was a child and in the house sick, I used to wonder how my shadow moved out in the sunshine. Did it move more freely when it wasn't tied to me? Or did it move cautiously and with hesitation when it had no one to give it leadership?"

"Let's go see," Aurelia said. "It isn't everybody who can spy on her own separated shadow. We can easily drift back there, but won't the people here wonder where Aurelia has gone?"

"No. I'll have it told that you're resting for a little while, in one of the slowly-rolling carnival vans."

The bodyguard did have it told. Then he and Aurelia did go into one of the vans, and when they came out again they were in total masquerade. The Julio Cordovan part of the bodyguard had always been known as "The Men With a Thousand Faces," and Aurelia herself was a girl of dozens of faces. They came out with other faces, and they were in carnival costumes. And then they dropped back several hundred yards to mingle with the retinue of Cousin Clootie, also known as the Dark Counterpart or the Dark Antagonist.

"You also are under my governorship, so I must know who you really are," Aurelia said as they went. "Are you Julio Cordovan or are you Marshal Straightstreet?"

"Possibly I'm both," Marshal-Julio said, "and most likely both of them are false names and false faces. My parents did not entail either of those names for me. I became Julio Cordovan when I was guard and protector of whole realms. And I was a good and air-tight guard for a while. Nothing could get by me. When I was in an early realm (not the realm that the international characters on the River Boat believe me to represent,) I began to hear about the tyro bodyguard in this country named Marshal Straightstreet. So I had an imitator, but with a curious turn, for I had used the name of Marshal Straightstreet when I had gone to college in this country. I checked on him, of course, and I found that he was indeed playing my double in appearance. I also found that he was in frequent contact with Rex Golightly who had known me well in college and who should have recognized an imitator as such. Or was there something else going on there?"

"But in my Julio Cordovan person I guarded a dozen realms well, and this for several decades. And then I came to my last realm. For a while I did well. Then one of the high persons whom I was to guard disappeared. No, he was not to be found anywhere. He had gone. I had to cover. I assumed his face and some of his duties, and I delegated the rest of his duties. It worked well except when the two of us had to appear at the same time. Then I resorted to illusion. As part of my early training, I was a stage magician and master of all the easy illusions.

"Then a second high person disappeared, and a third. That made the illusions more difficult, especially when persons of the opposition raised clamours that the leaders should show themselves together. The disappearances increased. Finally there were twenty-three top persons of the realm who had disappeared, and this included the President, Premier, Prime Minister, First Marshal, All-Bureau Chief, and Autocrat of Big Labour. I took the place of all of them for a while. Aurelia, did you ever try to play the roles of twenty-three other persons all at the same time?"

"No. I got up to four in mimes class at school. Some of the others got up to seven."

"It was too much for me. I broke and ran. Then there was chaos, very temporarily, in that realm. There was the legend of twenty-four leading men of that country all kidnapped at once. As the fabulous 'Cloak-and-Croak Chief I was the twenty-fourth disappeared man. Well, twenty-three of the twenty-four men had indeed been kidnapped, but not all at one time. It had been a one-and-two business.

"The new persons in the realm were in control within an hour, but perhaps I myself hadn't disappeared as completely as I'd thought. The new persons knew where I was, and they contacted me and offered me a job. They said that I had talent, I may take that job after your own case is completed. It's possible though that they'll kill me, talent or not, if I ever put myself in their hands."

"What if you should somehow un-play those twenty-three roles you played, one at a time, bodyguard? Run the whole thing backwards. And what if the twenty-three persons should somehow reappear one at a time again?" Aurelia suggested.

"They may yet reappear," the bodyguard said, "but not until the political climate of that realm has changed."

"I like your story," Aurelia said. "But what is the truth of it all? I am the governor and I

insist on knowing. Really, it's my curiosity that insists on knowing, and not my authority."

"Variation, that's the thing," Marshal-Julio said. "I could appear under a thousand faces. But then, to throw the hounds off, I wanted to appear twice under one face, just for a change of pace. So I set up two characters, Julio Cordovan and Marshal Straight-street of the same appearance. Julio was mostly for foreign work, and Marshal for feats in this country. And both contributed to my mystery."

"But there were two of you physically when you had a showdown with Rex Golightly. And two of you went into the blind-sack room, and only one of you came out."

"Oh, I really *can* maintain a double-man illusion for several minutes," the bodyguard said, "but I just barely stretched it in that confrontation. Needless to say, when the door of that little room was closed and triply-locked, the illusion collapsed completely. And I was again myself only, as I have always been. And yet I must continue under the Marshal-Julio illusion. It's part of my mystique."

There were banners up in the Cousin Clotie Cavalcade. "Repent, Repent!" some of them said. "This Day Shall Thy Soul Be Required of Thee," said others. And Cousin Clotie himself could be heard, walking apart and talking to a small and select group of his leading people.

"I know how to disguise it," Aurelia said, "but do you? You weren't able to disguise it from me, bodyguard. Don't you know enough to give every character you play a different odour-signature, a made-up one if there is no original one to imitate?"

"You can identify persons by their body-odour?" Marshal-Julio asked. "Can Cousin Clotie do it also?"

"Likely he can," Aurelia said. "I've never heard of a place, until this one, where people are so smell-less. It's coming into a blind world or a deaf world, only one doesn't notice so quickly that the people are handicapped. Well, let's stay to the leeward of them at least."

"Repent, repent!" Cousin Clotie was saying in a voice that was frayed from much talking. "It looks as if I arrived at this world at the very last possible time to call you to repentance. This is one thing that a good governor must do continually, call his people to repentance. I do not know which is the most urgent, that you should repent of your fiscal outrages, or your aesthetic, or your intellectual, or your practical, or your moral. I suppose that your fiscal and monetary outrages are the most enormous. Evil people, you have become ugly in your outrages!"

"He's right, of course," Aurelia said. "The teen-aged curmudgeon is right."

"But he's so rough about being right," the bodyguard commented. "The saying is that you can catch more flies with sugar than with vinegar."

"Look at the difference in the caught-flies though," Aurelia said. "The sugar-fed flies are always sickly, and what good are they when you have caught them? But the vinegar-fed flies at least give you something to work with. They seem strong and hard. They have a gloss on them. They may come with resentment, but at least they come with something. We do need vinegar always, and I had almost forgotten it."

"Don't you people know what money is *for*?" Cousin Clotie was asking with emotion. "It is for the corporate communion of all the people in the world. Let us not make it out to be either more or less than it is. It is the most workable and universal mechanical contrivance for effecting the communion of peoples. There is no absolute or personal ownership of money, not ever. Money is like office. It may be occupied and administered, but it may not be owned. We may not say that one who controls more money is worse than one who controls less, any more than one who administers a high office is necessarily worse than one who administers a lower one. Misuse of money is really the sin of gluttony or obesity. Taking into oneself more money than one needs is as bad as taking into oneself more food than one needs. Corporations of persons demanding more money than they need are corporations of persons demanding damnation for themselves and deprivation for others."

"Each world is a corporation of people unto itself, open only on the transcendental end. To break this corporation of people by greed or by grub is to bring on a reign of loneliness and misery, for they are the fruits of a broken corporation."

"Shadow and sunshine, shadow and sunshine," Marshal-Julio mumbled to Aurelia. "You don't say such things, Sunshine Aurelia, Governor of the Light Side. Why do you not?"

"Oh, I keep forgetting to say them," Aurelia answered. "I'll say them by and by. Maybe I'll say them tomorrow. You do not sense my murderer in this camp?"

"No, but I sense many murderers of Cousin Clotie in this camp. He may be a much-

murdered young man if these indications take flesh.”

“If you put on money as a false flesh, as something as close to you as your flesh, then may you bleed out of that false flesh to your death and perdition,” Cousin Cloutie was saying to an ever-increasing group of his followers. “No, I do not mean the persons on the hill there. I do not mean the person next to *you*. I mean you. I say it again, may you bleed to death and perishing out of that false flesh.”

“Yes, he can stir up a lot of murder that way,” Aurelia said, “but it makes me feel guilty that I don’t stir up more enmity against myself. I will see that I do stir it up.”

“The governor is worthy of his mansions,” Cousin Cloutie was saying to a larger and even more doubtful group of his partisans, “and I will have mine this night, or I will cause bolides to rain down from the gawky sky onto those who have not provided for me. At a certain hour after dark tonight, I will reach out my hand to where the doorknob of my night mansion should be. It had better be there, and somehow I have the assurance that it will be there. And it is being brought about by a queer intervention by I don’t know whom.

“Ah, my sunshine counterpart is present. I sense her but I cannot see her. Ours are parallel governorships, but they do not have to be contradictory.”

Cousin Cloutie had a throaty and difficult way of talking, especially when he was very much in earnest. And he had other awkward mannerisms. More persons have been hated and killed for having awkward mannerisms than for any other thing.

Aurelia and the bodyguard Marshal-Julio returned to the Aurelia Cavalcade just at dark, and they also returned to their proper appearances. The people formed their five thousand unit intimate circle on the grass and began to eat the cena meal. Cena was a very long meal, with persons conversing far into the dark hours. There was first cold fare and shell-fish, olives, mushrooms, eggs, and first wine. Then kids, beans, chicken, ham, and second wine. Then pastry, fruits, hare, nuts, and third wine. A little music and poetry then, and much talk. And there was not the same break-up after cena as after the other meals, for the people would night it here in this neighbourhood, whatever arrangements they could make. What Aurelia cried out for the fourth-corner-of-the-day homily was this:

Be you unrushed, and let the night come over you. I give you a darkness insight now. After the Passion in Large, there are the particular passions, or the style-passions of a particular world. I believe that they are really the mildest of the passions. Even when they are outrageous, it is with a small, tired, and toy-like outrage, or such it seems to be with you here. There isn’t much nobility in these particularities, not those of this world, not those of most of the worlds. What should a sincere governor do then? Gloss it over? I really don’t know yet.

What we come up against with the particular passions in non-authenticity or unreality. But our life-goal, our final happiness, is real. And the unsubstantial miasma of the particular passions often stands in the way of it. Yes, it is much of the daily world that is unreal. But we shall come to reality finally, for our loss or for our gain.

Joy is a bit higher than pleasure. They can both be minor happinesses. Or both can turn sour, when they are disordered or ungoverned. It is said that, for sorrow to be present, there must also be evil present. What, will not a mere misfortune cause sorrow? Yes, but it may be that a mere misfortune is evil. But cannot a misfortune or disaster be sent to us to test us and be for our ultimate good? It can be, but such a disaster or misfortune will not cause sorrow. It will cause something else, the name of which I know on “Shining World” but not here. It is something between sadness and pain.

What is the name of the feeling in one when a loved friend or familiar has gone wrong or evil? If a good person cannot feel sorrow, what is it that a good person feels when confronted with evil, not in himself, but in someone very close to himself? There is a feeling of rebellion against the idea that sorrow is tied to evil. The death of a husband may bring sorrow to the wife, but where is the activating evil that is supposed to be attendant to it?

To some extent, any sorrow in a governorship is charged against the governor. I am responsible, at least slightly, for all the sorrow in this world while I am governor here.

Does anybody know about any sorrow in this world anywhere? Please tell me about it if you do, for I must try to remove it.

People began to find themselves houses or nests for the night. There was a lot of tenting and of open camping. And some very big (hundred room or bigger, seven story or higher) tents were erected from their rolling wagons. These were the tents of the nomad kings, of the three, or of the twelve, or of the ninety-six of them. Even the Prince of Nysa was a magus with his pavilion. Who would have guessed that?

Potlatch, the great tent of the nomad king Rex Golightly, was erected again, but Aurelia would not stay in it. She had already experienced its grace. Another great tent-mansion, that of the magus Melchior Rixthaler, was put at her disposal. It was a luxury place.

"They don't have such mansions on Skokumchuck, I bet," the magus Melchior gloated. "This is bigger than that of Rex, and almost as big as that of Balthasar."

"Why do you suggest that I am from Skokumchuck?" Aurelia asked over-sweetly.

"So that you might slip and tell us where you really do come from," said Marco Rixthaler the son of the Magus Melchior.

And, a little bit later, and no more than half a mile from there, the High Governor Cousin Clottie put out his hand in the dark for the doorknob of the night mansion that should be provided for him. And he found it. It was the giant tent of the Magus Gaspar Grootgrondbezitter that was originally intended for Aurelia for the following night. It was fortunate that this mansion was ready and waiting or there would have been exploding bolides raining down out of the gawky sky.

SECOND IENTACULUM

“Through natural exuberance and curious mental exploration, certain men have grown into a peculiar curiosity and classification themselves, and have had a most singular sign placed upon them. This is sometimes understood to be one of the evil signs, but it is not so. Careful examination will always reveal that the two manifestations are quite different. The antler is rather the sign of excellence and achievement in a rational way, but in an unusual field of action or study. It is a sign of real discovery or rediscovery of forgotten things. While horned men are justly under the suspicion of evil, antlered men should not be.

“So far as I know, there are no antlered women.”

About Antlered Men from The Back-Door of History, by Arpad Arutinov.

“You are sure that they are not true horns, Aurelia?” Herr Boch asked. “Then what sort of a ‘boch’ am I?”

“You are a ‘boch’ of the analogous deer or *odocoileus* family, I suppose,” Aurelia said. “Is not the deer your totem animal? But you said that you had the growths in your youth and shed them and that you have been without them for twenty-one years. Oh, familiar, familiar! It’s an authentic pattern.

“But only those who prowl through the forests of curious information will grow them at all. Well then, I will question you out of your forest of curious information.”

Herr Boch did indeed have the beginnings of small, velvety, branching antlers. They had sprouted out of their nubs only since Herr Boch had known Aurelia, and only since he had stopped using the blue caustic powder to inhibit them.

“My question,” Aurelia said, “and I wouldn’t know how to ask it of anyone else, is what age of the present world are we in here? I assumed that we were in the sixth and final age, but are we? Has the Compensation been made yet or not?”

“This is the *World of the Compensation*, Aurelia,” Herr Boch said. “It is the only such world. Yes, the Compensation has been made.”

“But there are five or six other worlds that also claim to be the World of the Compensation,” Aurelia said, “and only one of them can be.”

“The others, they lie in their beards and they lie in their bowels if they say that they are,” Herr Boch growled in the grand old phrase. “This is the *only* world of the Compensation.”

“And we are subsequent to it here too?” Aurelia said. “How far after it? On this world, has Rome fallen yet?”

“It has, Aurelia, too millennia ago. And in one more millennium it will rise again. Rome has fallen on almost every world. Aurelia, you preach the doctrine of final happiness, and there are many symbols of this. For me there has always been only one such symbol, one goal in life. That would be a true artefact from ‘Shining World.’ I would give anything for such an artefact. I do not want it for wealth, for I already am the richest antique dealer in the world. I want it for myself and for what it symbolizes. Yes, I would give anything for it.”

“Oh, give the monkey a kind word and tell him what you want,” Aurelia said. “He’ll be glad to shinny up to the ship and bring an artefact of some kind down to you.”

Herr Boch went to talk to the monkey that Aurelia had made, and the Prince of Nysa came to talk to Aurelia.

“It is near cock-crow time, Aurelia,” he said, “and I will give you a horn to blow the cock-crow tune on. I heard you talking to Herr Boch about antlers and horns. You believe that horns are more predilected to evil than antlers are, and that is the truth of it. You also believe, from what you said yesterday, that strong and horned men are a rarity on this world. You are mistaken there. There are whole legions of them; they are dedicated to evil and destruction; and they will destroy you. But I left their company several millennia ago, and it

was then that I had myself poll or dehorned. I have saved my two horns though. The evil has gone out of them by now, and they have a strong and carrying tone. I have just given one of them to that strange manifestation who is named 'Cousin Cloodie.' Now I give the other one to you. Blow the cock-crow blast on it so that the day will know it is time to begin."

The Cavalcade had started a little while before dawn. Now, at prime dawn, they would stop for Ientaculum-breakfast. Aurelia took the horn (it was a very large, fluted goat-horn) from the Prince of Nysa. She blew a powerful cock-crow blast on it, and the cock joined in. And all the people sat in their large circle for Ientaculum.

But there were things tumbling out of the horn as Aurelia blew it. They couldn't be evil things, since evil had gone out of these horns as it had gone out of the Prince those millennia back when he had become a magus. But there was a cloud and a fog of multitudinous small creatures coming out of that blown horn. Many of them were red-eyed and glowering. If not evil, they were at least neutral or compromised.

Birds, fanged birds! These were very small birds as coming out of the clouds from the goat-horn that Aurelia had just blown. And yet they showed the straining and lean power required of large birds, and the apparent proportion of weight to span that indicated that they were really very large birds. (With birds, as with so many other things, the very most difficult of them were made first. These were the largest birds that could possibly fly. Then later, and still later, the smaller and easier-to-make birds appeared.)

These were the large and difficult birds seen through demagnifications, and yet no detail was lost in their reduction. The thousand-faceted eyes of each of them glittered in every separate and impossibly small facet. It was as though quantum vision did not apply to the viewing of these birds.

Out of the horn came flying-dragons, flying-reptiles, sky-flying fish. There were winged spiders and hydras. There were also sea-stallions and sea-cattle, and deep-sea tigers. Sea-serpents also, and land-serpents. There were the ancient three-humped camels of Arabia Felix. Behemoths, Leviathans, Mammoths, Mastodons! There were the big cattle that were earlier than the small cattle of today. (How can you tell big cattle when they are miniaturized? Never mind, you can tell.) There were fire-foxes and muscular apes. But mostly there were the horned animals, trumpeting and squawling. What do you think makes horns blow such masses of sound anyhow? One doesn't get something for nothing. Multitudes of creatures contribute their honking and hooting to every horn blast. A truly empty horn makes no noise at all.

All of these creatures had been obtained in Nysa when the Prince had first been Prince there. Most curious were the unfinished creatures dragging mud and slime of twice their bulk around with them. They were the creatures still being born out of the slime.

Big insects, yes *big* insects, elephant-sized insects! One could tell their real size from their proportions. Aurelia laughed and shook the horn, and ten thousand more creatures swarmed and poured out of it.

"Can you see them?" the Prince of Nysa asked.

"Of course I can," Aurelia answered. "Why should I not see them?"

"Many persons can't see them at all," the Prince said, "but we know they're there, coming out of every horn always. It's the shape of the horn that allows this, for all horns are much larger on the inside than on the outside, having channels and hidden space that can house almost anything. You know that the whole universe swarmed out of a horn that was blown quite by accident. Astronomers know it as the 'Big Blow.' Were that not so, we simply would not be."

"No, that is not true," Aurelia said.

It was unsalted Jew-Bread dipped in red wine that morning, figs instead of dates, morning-manna instead of cheese, mare-milk instead of goat-milk, roast goose instead of duck, perry in place of apple cider, prairie-cock instead of wood-cock. But one breakfast as day-opening is very like another, so long as both of them are blessed.

There was some activity around Herr Boch now. He had set up an Antikenladen, an antique and artefact shop, to deal with the immeasurably valuable 'Shining World' artefacts that the Aurelian monkey had brought down to him from the little space ship. There was a multiplication here, for the monkey had brought down only one double handful of small treasures, and now Herr Boch had set up six pavilions filled with them, and he had a dozen shop people showing them to connoisseurs and collectors who had assembled. There just hadn't been any such showing of dazzling art objects within memory.

Towards the end of the Ientaculum-breakfast, there was a little bit of unpleasantness when

a dowdy woman approached Aurelia very much as she had approached her the day before.

"Have you thought any more about the yin-yang balance?" she asked. "You had better think about it, or it will have your life."

"No, I will not think about it," Aurelia said. "It is all a false compensation and a false balance. It is a little bit of evil that the enemy has devised to blur people. I do not believe that if I want to walk up stairs I must first dig a compensating hole in the ground for balance. I do not believe that every time we light a light we must also light a darkness for balance. I wish you would quit fooling around with those lopsided yoyos. There'll be an accident with one of them."

"There cannot be," the woman said. "They will go to their harmless targets only, and return again from those harmless targets. There is no way they can be deflected by any earthly material to do damage to any earthly person."

"They're so much out of balance that someone is going to get killed by one of them."

"Yes, that's right," the dowdy person said, "and that someone to be killed is you."

Aurelia was so displeased by this bad-taste encounter that she hurried the departure of the Cavalcade along. And just then she heard the companion horn blow, the other horn of the Prince of Nysa that he had given to Cousin Cloutie. So the Cousin was still following them relentlessly, only a few minutes behind their schedule.

"Are the beasts that are tumbling out of his horn more shadowy beasts than those that are tumbling out of mine?" she asked herself, but she knew that they were.

"Everybody up!" she cried loudly then, and she blew her horn another blast and disgorged further swarms of creatures. "Be ready for the journey while I give the cock-crow first-corner-of-the-day insight:

Happiness is a habit that can be acquired. Yes, and it must be acquired by each of you or you are lost forever and my own record as governor will be very bad. I spoke last night about the revolt against the idea of unhappiness being always tied to evil. Well, happiness and goodness do make a fair fit together. I know that there is another revolt against the whole idea of goodness. If I followed my first idea and inclinations as governor, I would bring up heavy fire-power and blast all such brainless rebels to cinders.

Is habit mere routine? Can we be happy with routine happiness? Yeah, we can. Routine means "on the route," on the high road, not down in the gutters. And it is better to be clean and dry and clear-eyed on the road than to be wet and dirty and red-eyed in the gutter. The whole thing goes by free choice, and it is better to make a rational choice than an irrational choice.

People, you are not listening to me hard enough! I have just made a statement that shakes all the fog out of the world and puts things into clear perspective. *It is better to make a rational than an irrational choice*, I said, and the very mountains jumped like kids and bleated "Why didn't we think of that?" It would be so much easier to govern people if they paid attention then earth-shaking things are said. If I had suggested that you must do some great and mountainous thing to achieve ultimate happiness, would you not try to do it? When I say "Make a rational choice and all things will be added unto you," *then do it!* Don't gap like goopers.

The building of a good habit is the building of a good road through a swamp or jungle. So who is that who is hooting over there in the bushes? I'll have your bloody throats out of you if you hoot at me when I preach sweet reason to you. There are habits of kindness; there are habits of peace and patience; there are habits of wit and humour; there are habits of stunning genius and achievement; and all of them are yours by the method of easy rationality. Did you not know that the jagged-flame lightning and rolling thunder are mere habits that nature has developed? They are rational and beautiful and resounding habits, and they get the job done with style. Nature could have developed other habits nearly as striking (Don't you love striking lightning? They don't have it on all the worlds,) not nearly as seemly, and that would be everyone's loss. The name of un-outstanding habits is "grubbiness." The name of no habits at all is "chaos."

There is nothing easier and more rational than the high habits of the intelligently aimed road that knows its target. And that road takes us to the edge of the world and off it to "Final Happiness" and to "The Father of Lights."

SECOND PRANDIUM

In several of the morning journals that appeared just after Ientaculum-breakfast was completed, there were angry pieces by Jimmy Candor the obdurate reporter. These pieces were as rapid as they were angry, for they referred in part to words that Aurelia had barely finished saying. But it was a very quick-media world. It was Aurelia's final phrase 'The Father of Lights' that roused his murderous anger. So he wrote in the 'Morning Ponder':

"The Aurelian creature has clearly broken the 'Forbidden Phrase Law' known as h.r. 752,996,669. Fifteen minutes have passed since she used an unallowable phrase and the authorities still have not acted. She walks free in her shameful and brazen way. She has also broken the 'Freedom from Harassment Law' known as h.r. 752,996,670. There is even the report that she committed this offense once previously, yesterday or the day before. It is true that these two h.r. bills have not been enacted into final law, but they have not been rejected either. They are hanging in the deferred area sometimes called the 'enforce them if you can' classification. Well, we believe that we can enforce them.

"The Aurelia creature speaks very much about the 'rational.' What is more rational than the decision that the 'Freedom From Harassment Law' is intended to protect us from hearing references to any Deity? 'Father of Lights' is clearly a deity-term and as such it insults almost all of us. The law still provides for such things as 'Citizens' Arrest.' The law still provides, in extreme cases, for such things as 'Citizens' Executions.' This is an extreme case. We will wait for the authorities to act on this, but we will not wait for more than an hour or two."

The several other pieces by reporter Candor were somewhat more violent. It seemed that the more he thought about Aurelia the madder he got. The bodyguard Marshal-Julio was thoughtful when he read these reactions in the morning journals. He told Aurelia that she should look like the news-female Susan Pishcala if any unfriendly person should come near.

Marco Rixthaler, the son of the Magus Melchior, was very much hung and strung with Aurelia. And he felt that any suit he might launch was hopeless. In reality, Marco was up to the quality of the brightest of the young people of 'Shining World,' and he was the only son and heir of a magus; and magi have position on all the worlds and are qualified and accepted by their own excellence and reputation. Marco was intelligent; he was charming and of fine appearance; he rode on a speckled mule that was the pride of its species; and he had a rational heart in him such as Aurelia wished might be found in everyone. But somehow he feared that Aurelia was of another sort and above his station.

"I would like to touch you," Marco said. "If only I could touch you."

"Are you out of your 'Kiss the Girl of Your Choice' tickets from the Happy Ramble Show-Wagon? But you really don't need tickets," Aurelia said. "That's just for fun."

"I'm not out of them. But it's just like kissing an electric field."

"You've got to go deeper, Marco. Is there a problem? Tell me what it is."

"Yes. It just seems that you're a different sort of person entirely and that I would never be able to reach you in any way. Are we essentially different?"

"Oh, I don't know, Marco. Let's compare our 'Cogency Scans' and see whether they fall within a close enough bracket."

"I—ah—I don't have a 'Cogency Scan,' Aurelia."

"Then take one on yourself. It can be done in an instant."

"I—ah—don't know what a 'Cogency Scan' is, Aurelia."

"Oh Great Green Grampuses!"

Aurelia eyed a piece *Wolf Children in Perspective* by Nathaniel Nutting in the *Morning Perspective*, which had just come to her hand hot off the press:

"The so-called Sky-Wolf Children are a little to the left of the Bangla Wolf-Children of last autumn and a little to the right of the Little Green Wolf-Children of Lothogoth in February. In the latter case of the Little Green Wolf-Children, six soaps competed to see whether any of them could wash the green off the children. Sparkle-00 Soap did it, washed them clean and revealed that they were very ordinary children. Rack one up for Sparkle-00 Soap.

"But who can state the precise topography of such peripatetic myths. Is it all a question of

how far out, or how far in the sponsors of these things are? These two present Sky-Wolf Children (the name is given by the press and not by their sponsors) are travelling with a large carnival, *Whack and Zack Miller's Show-Country Shows*, though the children say that it is the carnival that is travelling with them. These present children are cultivated by a cabal of international frauds and criminally rich men, Rex Golightly, Melchior Rixthaler, Gasper Grootgrondbezitter, Balthasar Doppiocroce and others, though what use these criminally rich men intend to put the wolf-children to is not yet even guessed. The two children talk mostly in grunts and wolf barks. The girl is coated with a shining gold paint, and the boy with a shining ebony paint. The girl calls herself Aurelia or Little Eva, and the boy calls himself Cousin Clootie or The Dark Encounter. So at least is the report that we have received. Each of them claims to have been sent to govern this world for a while."

"It just seems that you are on a higher plateau," Marco Rixthaler said.

"Aw fishnets, fragrant fishnets!" Aurelia growled with unclear meaning.

On the second morning of it, only a couple of trucks from breakfast-food companies were gathering the morning manna to have it analyzed. "It will yield more adjectives than it will substance," one of the b-f workers said. And indeed the manna did have a fruity, nutty, honey-like taste. But with so much else to eat, the people just weren't bothering about gathering it on this second morning, though it had fallen copiously. The birds liked it though, and so did the ground-squirrels and the meadow mice. And it gave a pleasant aroma to the whole countryside.

"Are you an impossible goal?" Marco Rixthaler was asking dreamily. "Are you completely above aspiration? One might hope—could we ever, Aurelia—?"

"One might hope just about anything," Aurelia said. "Let's just see if we might be compatible. I don't even know how many chromosomes the people of this world have. How many do you have, Marco?"

"I don't know, Aurelia. I don't know how many."

"Well humpbacked haystacks, count them!" Aurelia exploded, though pleasantly. "Don't just gawk. Count them now."

"I don't know how, Aurelia."

"Then, Marco, there is an intellectual impediment whether there is a physical one or not. No, I'm afraid that we just couldn't ever, Marco."

By and by they were all seated in their circle for the Second Prandium meal. Aurelia scanned the *Mid-Morning Cogitator* as she second-breakfasted.

"These Star-Dust Twins, these Seven-Day Wonders (What? Have they still two more days to go?), these also will pass away with no more effect than a light breeze passing over the face of the earth. But we may have had many such breezes from several points of the compass, and who is to say that they have no effect at all? They may have caused subtle changes in the faint lines of our corporate faces and our corporate brains. And the changes may have been on the better side."

By the by the second Prandium meal was finished.

"Everybody up!" Aurelia cried loudly, and she blasted on her Prince-of-Nysa horn. "Make ready to resume the journey while I give the second-corner-of-the-day homily:

You don't speak plainly on this world, and I want that failing corrected. It's difficult to govern a verbally-crippled and thought-crippled bunch. Please understand the difference between pleasure and happiness. There can be good pleasure and evil pleasure; but there can be only good happiness. Good pleasure is *not* less exuberant than evil pleasure. It can be much more exuberant. It can be rowdydow. It can be words that you don't have at all. It need not be quiet. And bad pleasure can be of a deadly quiet sort. Please get rid of the word-trammels and thought-trammels that bind you.

There is nothing worse than the tedious drudgery of disordered pleasure, but your imprecision of thought leads you to believe that deadly tedium may crop up almost anywhere. It may not. It is confined to a small area. If you will only understand where that evil tedium is you can avoid it. Please see the difference between things that sound alike, between "ordered" and "organized," between "freedom" and "liberty," between "authority" and "rule." ("Rule" of itself cannot author anything. "Authority" can.) Oh, why don't you have intuitive words and statements in the languages of your world?

In other things, your imprecision with words worries me. A defined “criminally rich man” may now have wealth and income below the “poverty level.” And a “certified pauper” may be in the upper five percent of the wealthiest men. The first one will be denied all aid, and the latter one will receive all aid. It has something to do with the “grandfather clause,” but it has more to do with your stubborn imprecision of words and thoughts.

The most rational road will always traverse the richest and most discovery-prone country. There will be bonus and bounty at every league of it. The air hums with activity all along the rational road. There is energy released at every step. It is the common magic of every day. Why do you keep falling off of the wonderful road? What’s the matter with all of you anyhow?

It is because I can’t make you understand your present position and composite that I can’t make you understand your choices, though it seems so easy to choose the excellent over the execrable. A living and bodied person is a sort of arc of a circle, or perhaps of a parabola. If we continue the lines of that arc out beyond the body and the person, we come to a puzzle. The lines cannot be completed in the person’s own world or context. They go over the edge. Part of the enclosed, extended person will be either ultra-natural or infra-natural—anyhow it will be in another world, beyond the bounds of its supposed nature. We are sometimes told to become whole persons, and so we must do. But our own life and world are too small to contain our whole personhood.

Well, is there any way that the circle or parabola of our persons can be completed? Of course there is. That is what I talk to you about four times a day. The reason that we are all so funny-looking, the reason that our institutions and our worlds are so funny-looking, is that this isn’t all of any of them. There is more of each of us somewhere else. There is more of everything of ours somewhere else.

SECOND MERENDA

News-person Susan Pischcale had been murdered while travelling with the slowly-moving Cousin Clottie Cavalcade. "I believe that it is a case of unmistakable identity," said bodyguard Marshal-Julio.

"Were you involved in making her identity unmistakable?" Aurelia asked.

"Possibly, possibly," the premier bodyguard said. "One never knows what plant may be watered by one's news leaks. It was surely known that you were using her appearance for a disguise. But then there was a lot of enmity against Susan. She did not have a sweet disposition. Since it will be well for you to use each disguise only once, we can discard a used disguise with a free conscience. Naturally you were spotted while wearing the Susan disguise, but naturally you were not spotted quickly enough for you to be done in while wearing it yesterday. Certainly they knew that you were not using that same disguise today, and certainly they (or perhaps he) pretended to think that you might be."

"I may use it again to spook him, but only momentarily. If Susan herself could be shot so easily, then I could be also," Aurelia half worried.

"Not at all, girl. Where are your brains? Your space ship above your head is your shield, but it is programmed to shield only you. You must have put in the shield and programmer—did you not?"

"I suppose so. But I copied a lot of things from my classmates, and they helped me in still more things. I remember it, but I remember that it has a very limited range. It would not cover me here. Not enough power for it. Too far from my own Cavalcade."

Aurelia and the bodyguard, both in face disguise, were back in Cousin Clottie's parade the second afternoon of the trek. They were about five-eighths of a mile from Aurelia's own Cavalcade.

"Look overhead," the bodyguard said. "It follows *you*, not your Cavalcade."

And of course the little space ship was above Aurelia's head in the Clottie Cavalcade.

"But that's a tip-off, isn't it?" Aurelia asked. "Mine enemies will know that I am here with this group, no matter how I am disguised."

"So you are tipped off then, but you are not dead. We have to keep the shield over you. You are, generally speaking and with quite a few exceptions, impervious to death attack. Let us keep you so. Yes, they know when you are in your own group, and they know when you have left your group. But, in the ordinary course, you are safe wherever you are."

"How about poison? I've heard that poison is sometimes used on primitive worlds."

"You still don't remember what it is with your space ship, Aurelia? That thing can smell out any poison, except very slow-working cumulative poisons, at a thousand meters, and it can seek and destroy them within that distance. It can destroy both poison and poisoner. The poisoner will have a trace on him."

"There are holes in it though. There are holes in my armour," Aurelia said. "There was one person who could be killed by a lateral shot in the left elbow. There was another who could be killed by a small dart shot into the tragus of his right ear. And there was one who was unprotected in his heel. From what sort of shot am I unprotected?"

"The monkey from the ship has advised me that there is such a shot, and to be on the guard for it. But it must originate from so low a level that only a worm could shoot it. And you must cooperate with that worm also, to shield it from the protection of the space ship with your own body. That means that you would have to bend low over the worm. Aurelia, if you see a worm in the grass who is armed with a pistol, do not lower your breast to within twenty millimetres of that worm-brandished pistol. And even if you do that, do not pre-empt the angle that will blot out your space ship entirely."

"I will try to remember it," Aurelia said. "Do my enemies know my weak spot?"

"No. There is no way that they could know. You are safe from everything, except a change

in the rules. But why must we come to listen to Cousin Clotie today?"

"Ah, because I like to listen to him. Besides myself, he is the only one with true authority on this world. The investigations that I have made tell me that all of the world-leaders of every realm have defective authority for some reason."

Karl Talion, Blaise Genet, Helen Staircase, several others, had left the Aurelian Migration and joined that of Cousin Clotie. How odd of them! Aurelia felt that it was a sort of treason. It was as if they had felt that Cousin Clotie was more interesting than she was. And she'd started with an advantage. She'd had them first.

But these international 'brag' players have the advantage now: they knew the two spies.

"Poor Julio," Helen Staircase said. "He has a thousand faces, and we'd know him in any of them. And we'd always know Aurelia. The sunshine of her sparkles through every chink. You weren't very good at playing 'mimes' when you were at school, were you, Aurelia?"

"How should you know that I played 'mimes?' " Aurelia asked. "Now I am jealous of you fabulous ones. I had you and I lost you. Why have you left me?"

Karl and Blaise were matching coins with stark intensity, with their eyes on everything else at the same time. Blaise, as always, seemed to have a terrible headache that he had half reached an accord with.

"Come in!" Blaise called harshly once. "The door's open."

"No, it is not really open," Aurelia said, "or it is not wide open enough. Why have you left me for Clotie, people? Why?"

"But you are Aurelia from 'Shining World' where everything goes right," Helen said. "Cousin Clotie is from 'Dark Companion SHOK-994' where everything goes wrong. And we also belong to an everything-goes-wrong people. Like the fellow said 'I never cared for pretty girls. I always liked the funny-looking ones. They just seem more like my kind of people.' We do care for you, pretty girl, but grubby Cousin Clotie is more our kind of people. We're full of shadows. And he is also. And you're not."

"We shop for salvation, Aurelia," Karl Talion said, "for ourselves and for our realms. Oh no, Blaise! Another match where neither of us wins! I hate it when one coin comes up 'bust' and the other comes up 'neither of the above.' We shop for salvation. And Banko Benko, the odds-makers' odds-maker, has posted odds as high as eight hundred to one against my finding it. He's even posted three hundred to one against Helen. With such odds against us, we'd be better disposed to believe with the commonality that 'salvation' is only a made-up word with no meaning."

"Why don't you then?" Aurelia asked them.

"We're smarter than the other people," Karl said. "We know what's out there. And we are to be held more to account than other people. We are accountable for our realms also. And we heard the words 'Go and see.' That's really why we were here and waiting when you and Cousin Clotie arrived. We have been listening to you, and now we will listen to Cousin Clotie. Your way is a little too easy. We'd rather come to salvation over mountains and obstructions and through walls of fire. We always liked hard wagers. We'll find one hard enough yet."

A man, oh, he was that blind man Michael Strogoff (he's been at the same table with the gamblers on the River Boat) handed Aurelia a bank newspaper. "There is a piece here about you and your dark companion, in *The Afternoon Endeavor*," he said. And he pointed it out to Aurelia.

Aurelia had learned to finger-read in third grade, and she read the piece:

"We regard Aurelia and Clotie as two baleful and possibly contagious bolides that have struck our world," the newspaper piece said. "They are meteors, and that is all that they are. Yes, they are animate, but as many as two percent of all meteors are animate by true definition. They are space animals, and they are hurtling rocks at the same time. They have not been quarantined, so they must be treated as any other meteors that were not immediately quarantined at the time of impact. They must be deactivated, even though 'deactivated' has a special meaning when applied to animate meteors or space animals. The two deactivated hulks (their bodies) may possibly be studied when they are safe to handle, but first they must be rendered safe. We will give the authorities only a short time to do this. Then our volunteer 'Bolide Deactivation Brigade' will act. This constitutes a public notice."

"I'm a bolide," Aurelia announced when she had read the piece.

"I'm from a cometary family myself," Helen Staircase said, "but we have to forget the old days. Cousin Clotie is going to say a few words right now. What if, when she hears them,

Aurelia should permanently leave the Aurelia Camp and join that of Cousin Clootie?"

"I do join it, but only for a short while," Aurelia said.

"I have been asked to remove the mystery about myself," Cousin Clootie was speaking, "but there is no special mystery about me. There is only the mystery on me that is on all of you, the mystery of being human.

"On my world, we are an unoriginal and imitative people. In particular we imitate the talented people of what Aurelia calls 'Shining World.' But on their part they deny that we exist. We imitate their school curriculum as well as we are able to, since it has proved so successful with them. Actually we imitate it without its 'Shining World' errors, so it proves even more successful with us. We imitate it in one way by sending young students out on the 'World Government Course.' We try to match the 'Shining World' children one for one, and we quickly found that our governorship served a more important function than did theirs. We gave government exactly in those dark areas where the people of 'Shining World' were blind to the need of it. In the present sense, matching Aurelia one for one was difficult because Aurelia had no idea where she was going. But navigation and tailing were my strong points.

"We find now that we complement more than we imitate. The people of 'Shining World' are superficial. They are 'surface people' only, bright surface though they have. We are somewhat deeper. So, though of shabbier quality, is this present world one of deep and layered arrangement. We possess something of all the ninety-nine depth layers that are always below the bright surface layer. From those depth-layers, with clumsy hands and minds, we try to bring out dark riches to bright day. It may be that we know more about resurrections than do those who have never trafficked with the dead. All that Aurelia preaches and talks about is correct, but there are other flocks and swine-herds that she knows not of.

"Aurelia is herself a poem, but she misunderstands the necessity of poetry. So do I misunderstand it. For when it is necessary, then it is already defeated. And yet it is a necessity always. It must be a luxurious and unneeded outpouring, and yet it is more important than many of the crying necessities of the world. Even blank or incomplete, even though it is inartistic or unstrung, poetry is a triumph over the flat daytime. And however it is come by, it must be given out freely.

"And Aurelia does not tell you very much about the tangle of flesh that is such a power-house. That is because she is only fourteen and I am fifteen. The things to remember about the tangle of flesh are that it is creatively powerful and that it is magic. And the important sub-thing to remember about it is that at least half of the time it is black magic—yeah, I mean reeky, black magic.

"But many who are the most voluble and vocal about the flesh tangle have the weakest hands at the helm of it, and they are the flabbiest at directing it or sailing it. They are like the man who had a beautiful and savage horse, and the horse chased and herded the man and drove him through broken ground and horrendous cactus. The man was not able to master the horse, and he even said that horses are not meant to be mastered. But they are.

"On this world we still hear the arguments that nuclear power should be outlawed because it is highly explosive, because it is often contaminating and polluting, and because it can never be completely safe. All these things can be said of the flesh-tangle power-house also. And yet it must not be outlawed in the main, and it must not be regulated by the ICC either. It must be handled rationally. As to how it may be handled rationally, I have a number of phrases handy that cover most of the ground; but I have experienced that I am hooted and derided whenever I use these phrases. Your hearts, I suspect, are blacker than I had at first imagined.

"Why do I feel such a close kindred to you of this world? It is because I come from a 'dark companion' planet, and this is a 'dark companion' planet also. Of course I am sure of this! There used to be, I am told, some crackpot discussions here as to whether your world had a 'dark companion.' Most of the thoughtful persons put the idea down as nonsense. And those thoughtful persons were correct, but only in a technical sense. This world does not have a 'dark companion' because this world is a 'dark companion.' You are standing on an anti-earth and denying that there is an anti-earth. That is folly for you.

"Your world does have a 'bright primary,' and you people on this world are so dim-eyed that you will not allow yourselves either to see or to believe in that bright, primary planet.

"Yes, the planet under our feet here is a 'dark companion.' It is the donkey-counterpart world of a horse world, it is the goat world to a sheep world, it is a left-handed world to a

right-handed world. Oh, it is! Well, people of the contrary donkey-brotherhood, I wish that you didn't belong to it, and I wish that I didn't belong to it either. We are a 'dark-underside' fraternity.

"A paradox and a problem though. Why are dark undersides always coloured white? And why are bright top-sides always coloured black? Is someone, other than ourselves confused about these things? Oh, I will talk to you further on these and other matters, but my ship wants to speak to me now."

Yes, Cousin Cloutie had his own ship hovering over his head, but it had much poorer visibility than Aurelia's ship. While Aurelia's ship was sharp and dark against the bright sky, the underside of Cousin Cloutie's ship was blue-white against the blue-white afternoon firmament, and you could lose it just while you were looking at it. And Cousin Cloutie had a black tarsier-like mechanism with bright eyes that went up to his ship and back on errands. It didn't fool around and it didn't pull monkey-shines.

There was another slight difference between the Aurelia and the Cloutie Cases. The daytime constellations could be seen in the sky over Aurelia's Cavalcade, but they could not be seen over Cousin Cloutie's, and this although the two aggregations were now only half a mile apart.

There was a very poor-looking man with a push-cart. He was vending sack-cloth and ashes. It was for the penitents, so he shouted half-heartedly, should there be any. Karl Talion, Blaise Genet, Helen Staircase, Michael Strogoff all began to haggle and buy their sack-cloth and ashes, and they talked about the quality of it.

"Oh come on," Aurelia protested. "I am still with you. This is the time for joy-songs and for aromatic oil and nard to smear on your heads. Sure I say 'Repent!' But I say 'Repent and Rejoice!' We should get an 'oil-of-gladness' vendor pushing a happy cart. I will get one for my own camp."

"We mourn partly for your own death, Aurelia," Helen Staircase said, "and we repent because we have more need of it than do these other good people."

Aurelia left them in exasperation and went back to her own caravan. And she blew the horn for merenda though it was a little bit early for that meal. Then, after a short bit, giving the people hardly time to finish (they always ate more than was good for them anyhow) she blew the horn again and proclaimed:

"All up! Ready for the journey while I give you a Fat-Tom-Insight-of-the-Third-Corner-of-the-day:

Each one of us must become extraordinary, unless we are one of the rare ones who are extraordinary from birth. There will be a great change in us, but it will not be a change without preparation and splendid will. One day(*this day for some of you*) you will be walking down the ordinary life road, and you will be transformed. You will in a moment cease to be ordinary people and will become extraordinary people. Or else you will cease to be ordinary people and become veritable swine. The choice will be an easy one, so please do not stumble over it. You can have it whichever way you wish. And when the change takes place, you will no longer be walking down an ordinary life road. You will be walking down an extraordinary road, or you will be stumbling down a swine-trough. But if some of us fail in the transmutation, or go swinish, then the rest of us of the kindred cannot become as extraordinary as we would wish. Please keep this in mind.

Things will always go well when everybody has become extraordinary. It is those who have not become so who slow the rest of us down and keep our surroundings grubby. I am telling you grubby people, *stop dragging your feet!*

It's said that the rule by which we play the game is "the world of things as they are." Well, that's a rule that can be bent then, for we *can* change that world. The world changes every day by natural decay and ultra-natural renewal. We, the all of us together, make a peculiar picture. It is peculiar because we are able to enlarge or diminish the frame of it while we are part of the picture.

There are not virtues. There is only virtue. We cannot have some of the particular virtues without having them all. To lack even one of the six particular virtues is like having a geometrical cube lacking one of its six sides. Without one of its sides, it wouldn't be a cube at all.

What did you say, man? You say that seven particular virtues are commonly counted on this world? Aw blacksnake blood! How am I going to come up with a regular seven-sided figure to use for analogy?

You ask me for an account of the technology of “Shining World” as though that might have something to do with my credentials. I will not give any such account to you. It isn’t important enough to give. It is not that I am completely ignorant of our technology, but technology is a mere trifle, a barrel of trifles. It is always good enough, whatever it is. Technology is accomplished in several different ways, sometimes by “modern” (in one of the modes) research and development by public push, sometimes by private-sector brain-busting, sometimes by fetish-application and counterpoint (the latter method is often called magic.) These methods work about equally well. There are fetish-magic technologies that are superior to our own technology on “Shining World.” But some of the lands or worlds with the better technologies are not always better-governed or more readily governable.

Tell me (and I don’t mean to skip around in my talk) why do you have so few three-storied and five-storied and seven-storied words on this world? Why, for instance, have you forgotten the great depths of “wind.” Wind is an animation for the *anemos* the wind is also the *anima* the spirit. Why have you forgotten that the gust is the same word as *ghost*? They are the same word and thing. Why have you forgotten that the spirit is the breath, and that we respire and inspire when we breathe? And that the Holy Spirit is the Holy Breath?

Why can I not make you see that the spirit blows new every day? Why can I not make you see that he’s knocking at every door and window of you. Oh, that’s what’s bugging Blaise Genet! He has more acute hearing than some others. He hears the spirit knocking to come in. Then why doesn’t he let it come in?

There is a new wind blowing this day and every day. It is your skins and your noses that are stale, so you do not recognize it. It is your eyes that are bleary and do not see the fruited wake of the wind.

You there, dammit, if you go to sleep while I am talking, I will break every bone in your body and throw you in the garbage can!

SECOND CENA

Rex Golightly was standing on the edge of the river in the early morning. A river now? Yes, but it was the little river between the upper and lower lakes. Tomorrow they would be on a lake-shore again. The River Boat was on the River now. It had come down from the upper lake by locks that not every boat knew about. Already its night lights and night music were twinkling. In the deeper water it was dark now, but there was still light in the shallow. It was at the depth between the deep and the shallow that Rex was addressing his ears.

“Rex, Rex, my delightful friend,” said the Magus Balthasar Doppiocroce as he came up to the tycoon. “Either your inventions have surpassed themselves, or your wits have lost their edge. That fish isn’t really talking to you.”

“Did I say that a fish was talking to me, Balt?”

“No. But you were listening to that fish talk.”

“How do you know what I was listening to, or whether I was listening to anything? You say that I was listening to a fish talk. And you say that it was not talking. Whose wits have the softest edge anyhow, thine or mine? But join me and hear him. He has some really hydracious ideas.”

“Aquaceous is the word,” the fish said.

“Fish, you told me yesterday morning that my ward Aurelia would live forever, or for three days, whichever came first,” Rex said to the fish. The fish loomed large and deep in the water. It may have been an ego-fragment, but it seemed quite solid. “I intend to hold you to that prophecy.”

“So hold me to it then,” the fish said. “The ‘three days’ come before the ‘forever’ comes, and Aurelia will die tomorrow night in fulfilment of the prophecy.”

“No, you’re wrong,” Rex said. “Listen to this, fish, and know that I now have a magus as witness to your words. Forever comes *before* three days, since forever goes back to the

beginnings of things. Then I will hold you to it that Aurelia lives forever, since forever comes first."

"I will see what I can do," the fish said.

"At one time in my youth, by long practice, I was able to project and make visible an ego fragment of my own," Balthasar the Magus said. "I made it in the form of a female butterfly, a pleasantly-voiced psyche. Talking to such a projection of one has much more style than talking to one directly; it is much more creative. I mean that the thoughts can bounce back from such a projection shattered and then reformed, and they may be strong with aspects that are only implicit in the thoughts at first. At that time, butterfly-projection was quite new. I'm not sure but that I originated it. It's common now, and the Swiss School of Fragment Projection teaches it to tyros. But it wasn't so then.

"But I had to give up my butterfly ego-fragment. A high servant saw me pull the fragment in again after a conversation with it. He thought that I had eaten it, and he reported to the king that I had eaten one of the royal butterflies. For that, I was fined one hundred thousand ducats."

"Did you pay it?" the fish asked from deep water.

"Not exactly," the magus answered. "Rather I paid it to myself. The next morning I was the king. My father, the old king, had died in the night. So I pardoned myself of the debt, as it were. You remember my father the old king, Rex."

"Ah well, this isn't a king's fish," Rex remarked.

"Yes. Yes, I am a king's fish," the fish contradicted.

"Certainly you are. You are Rex's fish, and Rex is a nomad king," Balthasar said. "But, Rex, do you believe that by conversing with one of your own fragments you can compel fate?"

"There is no fate, Balt," Rex Golightly said. "There is only El-Allah—God. An esoteric passage that I read lately maintains that God has a secret love for riddles and catch-phrases. Well, I have caught him by a verbalism, by a riddle, by a catch-phrase. If he enjoys it, he may let her live forever."

"On the other side, she will live forever, Rex," Balthasar said piously.

"No. On this side!" Rex insisted. "I still have a sceptical man's distrust for the other side."

"Butterflies are fairly easy psychic projections," Balthasar said. "One begins with them. They are showy and easy. It's like young music students playing 'Humoresque' or 'Chop-Sticks.' But your fish maintains its own depth in the water. It has considerable weight, and it speaks with resonance in its own voice. That cannot be easy. I remember when we were at the 'School for Princes' together; you were the best illusionist of us all. But I didn't know that you had become this good.

"King's fish, what effect will Aurelia really have on this globe?" Balthasar asked, talking to the fish now. "Will her name even be remembered in a week, or will it be that her name was written on water?"

"As to that, I'll tell you what I did see written on the water in my days a-swimming in the various waters around this world," the fish said. "I saw these words written:

She was my love and my life. Water, do not let her be forgot.

Preserve her name. Her name is Mary Jane.

These words were written on the water, and they did not become obliterated. I have seen them twice, thirty years apart, and they do not fade at all."

"Fish!" Rex Golightly commanded in a strange voice. "Write this on the water! *Preserve her name. Her name is Aurelia.* Write those words! Write them now!"

The fish wrote the words on the water. And the words did not fade.

"Rex, Rex, Fish-Rex and Man-Rex," the Magus Balthasar laughed, and he placed a royal hand on Rex's shoulder. "You are an eternal delight to me. Really, there was never such an illusionist or such a humorist as yourself. And, Rex, there has *always* been something fishy about your humour. It's fun being with you. Fun!"

But the tycoon Rex Golightly was crying deeply as he looked at the water and its words—*Preserve her name. Her name is Aurelia.*

A leading member of the 'Kill Aurelia Now League' came to her and said that he had defected, that he had now joined the 'Kill Cousin Clotie Now Group.'

"It was really a choice of satisfactions," he said. "We have to focus on the most intense satisfaction. It would be fun to kill you, but—"

"No, it would *not* be fun to kill me," Aurelia interrupted. "It would be another thing

entirely, not fun. It would be an evil pleasure to kill me.

"It would be a bang to kill you," the person said. "But some of the more knowledgeable of us have decided that it will be more of a bang to kill Cousin Cloutie. We must focus on a single target for the most intense bang. We can always kill you later.

"Well, what have the *less* knowledgeable of you decided about it?" Aurelia asked.

"What?"

"Why do you have to kill either of us?"

"It's an imperative," the person said. "It is a pleasure-pain-paradox imperative. Girl, you just do not understand people. You don't understand what makes them go. Killing is really the only fun."

"No, it isn't fun," she insisted wearily. "It's something else." She made a sign, and Marshal-Julio and a couple of his assistants seized the person.

"Oh, what a dirty trick!" the person wailed. "We might have expected something better from someone like you. It's a breach of faith for you to retaliate."

"We'll take him and shake some answers out of him," Marshal-Julio said.

"No you won't," Aurelia smiled. "Only reasonable people have answers."

Aurelia's after-cena talk that night was a little bit on the discouraged side:

I have asked all of you to report to me any cases of unhappiness that are to be found on this world that I am governing. And the only reports that I have received are joker reports. Why is this? I am plainly amazed at it. I know that there *are* cases of unhappiness on this world, for being spotted with unhappiness is one of the properties of all inhabited worlds. Did you think that I was kidding? I wasn't. Do you believe that I cannot do anything about unhappiness? Oh, but I can! In most cases, I can cure it. In almost all cases I can ameliorate it.

Well then, let us talk about cheap-shooting, the besetting offense of this world. It is cheap-shooting that sets up most of the steps to unhappiness. It is cheap-shooting that turns people into sleazy frauds. Cheap-shooting is a main part of the "always-a-bad-word-for-everybody" syndrome. It is a main part of the "hatred-is-fun" life-statement. Fun? No, no, these sarcophagus assaults can have no real contact with fun itself.

"Hatred is the hottest commodity there is," is the hottest private slogan of those who live off the public and pander to it, political persons and media persons and entertainers, directors of aggregations, hucksters of opinions, moulders of styles. "Give the people something they can really hate, and they will follow you forever, though they are shoeless and starving," a politician told me this very day. "Give them something to hate and they will give you the house-money and the food-money and the babies'-milk-money. Give them something to tear down and they are yours to the last ditch." Now this is the way it is, here and there, yes. But this is not the way it is so universally as the hatred-is-a-way-of-life faction wants it to be. That's the way it is on the surface, and to varying depths and uneven extent. And that is the way it will have to stop being! As governor of this world, I say that it will have to stop right now.

To the worst of you slanderers and defamers and hate-em-alls, I say "Cut it out!" I say "Cut out your tongues and cut off your ears, and do it right now, for they give offense." I have a big barrel right here. It will hold five hundred kilos of tongues and ears. *I'm what?* Why should I be kidding?

And for the bad but not quite the worst of you I say "You're not having any fun that way! Get rid of that stuff and start to have fun!"

To those who say that neither the rotten messing-up nor the funful happiness are any business of the governor, I say "It is the governor who defines what is the governor's business. This governor defines these things as very much the governor's business.

There was about a hundred kilo-weight of cut-off ears and tongues deposited in the big barrel after Aurelia's talk. They filled the barrel only about one-fifth full. Many of the worst of the people were unwilling to take extreme means for their own cure. Even in that one-fifth quantity, there were many cow and pig tongues and ears. The people who put them there seemed to be deriding the whole business.

Further Magi erected great houses that night and made them available. But, first and

meanwhile, everybody of both the Aurelia and the Clootie camps had a hootenanny after the cena-meal. And the people on the shore were joined in voice and sound and spirit by the people of the River Boat and a number of private boats.

Overhead, Aurelia's ship blew all its horns, and with more orderly sound than usual. And Cousin Clootie's ship resounded with the music of the Aeolian Zither (actually a space zither). It was a very good concert and multi-group sing-along and fun-fest there by the river. Very good, but not perfect. Other things crept into it. The words of some of the lyrics were raunchy, and those were only the ones that could be understood. The hatred-is-a-way-of-life faction was out in force. The hate-em-alls were there. A lot of bootleg hatred and partisanship was smuggled in. The people still have a long way to go on the road to happiness.

THIRD IENTACULUM

“A side-light on the Aurelia and Cousin Clootie foofaraw is the little known fact that there really is a person in the world with the rightful title of ‘Governor of the World,’ ” a piece in *The Morning Sickness—The Dissident Newspaper That is Different* said on the third morning of the journey. “This person is an ideal governor in two ways: His name cannot be publicly known, and he had a very limited field of activity. What he actually does is set the prime rate of interest for all the lands of the world every day, and then that rate sweeps around the world from the date line back to the date line again. This ‘Governor of the World’ is actually an attendant to a computer that figures the interest rate from thousands of items of input. But the ‘Governor’ does have some power. There are several over-ride buttons that he can push that will make wilful though only fractional adjustments in the interest rate.

“Are there any over-ride buttons that either Aurelia or Cousin Clootie could push to make any wilful fractional adjustments in the affairs of the world? We believe not. There is no possible way that either of them could take any effective governing action, not even the most fractional one. They will not leave even a memory behind them.”

“What, will you not leave any foot-prints behind you, Aurelia?” asked Rex Golightly who read the piece in the *Morning Sickness* over Aurelia’s shoulder.

“No, tycoon, no,” Aurelia said, “no foot-prints, no handprints, no ear-marks even.”

People began to be very kind to Aurelia that morning. The wife and the morganatic wife of Rex came around to pay their respects, as did fifty of the other kindred. And there came the families of all the other Magi also, and people of lesser royalty. There even came thousands of commoners from both campments and from the countryside as well as the towns and cities. They talked to her and patted her.

“How does it feel on the last day of your life?” was the thing they asked her the most often and with the most solicitude.

“I have not agreed that this is the last day of my life,” Aurelia still held out. “Why should it be? What could happen to me? This is one of the ‘spooking worlds.’ Did you know that? I remember now that it is in the planet catalogs as a ‘spooking world.’ You people here are trying to spook me into believing that I will die tonight, and you do kill people by spooking. Now I know that all of you are good people, but ‘spooking’ is an evil habit.”

Well, it did make one a little nervous for everyone to assume and say that she was on the last day of her life. Who would kill her? The worm with the pistol? But that could happen only if Aurelia cooperated with the extraordinary worm.

“If anyone else says ‘Poor Lamb’ to me and pats me on the head, I’ll pop!” Aurelia grouched. “I’m not done in yet.”

“It is a cheap response, yes,” said Marshal-Julio who was with her, “and I suspect that you find it a little bit cloying. But persons are able to speak easy words only for the false emotions, not for the true. We all have true grief for your going. We have had you for such a short time, and we hate so much to lose you. It just seems as if we should have responded in some fuller way to your visit to our world.”

Marshal-Julio seemed to be trying to say other words that would not come.

“Poor lamb,” he finally said, and he patted Aurelia on the head.

Blaise Genet came to see Aurelia on that morning also.

“This is the last time I will ever see you in life,” he intoned sorrowfully. “I didn’t appreciate you. I was preoccupied with other things. Now it will be finished.”

“Don’t you join that damned funeral march, Blaise,” Aurelia said. “I don’t admit any of it at all. I’m not going to die today.”

“Maybe not, but I am,” Blaise said. Then he fell down and died, apparently in pain.

"I was wrong," Aurelia said as people began to gather around Blaise, thinking he might not be dead yet, though he was. "It wasn't particularly the spirit trying to get in. It wasn't anything trying to get out. It was just his steep blood-pressure that made him hear knocking. But a good governor wouldn't have let it kill him."

The great philosopher Aldous Spencer-Trencher brought Aurelia a bowl of Slowpoke Snails and talked to her.

"You die of a sickness, fair-haired Aurelia," he said. "It is the same sickness that a roebuck dies of when the lion breaks its neck and severs its throat. This might not be thought of as a sickness, but it is. It is the destructive response of the environment to the person. It is the sickness of the roebuck being who he is and the lion being who he is. Yours is a type of 'seven-day sickness.' For you, it might be called a 'world sickness,' for you really do not belong to this world and you cannot live here more than seven days, the period of the infection. This world is that very large microbe, the lion, that slays you. You always insist that you belong to the 'broad human race,' yes. But the mechanical and medical cause of your death here will be the local or narrow human race. An allergy is set up between you and this local or narrow human race. It rejects you out of its blood stream. Either you must die of the contact, or the local race must. It is simpler for you, having fewer moving parts than the aggregate of the local race, to die. Yes, and it is medically neater. The reverse of the process is called 'catastrophic epidemic' or 'deadly plague.' There is a strong feeling against this reversal whenever it happens."

"Thank you for the Slowpoke Snails," Aurelia said. It was a very large bowl of them, and Aurelia was one of those persons who eat Slowpoke Snails slowly and sparingly. She went around to other persons, giving them some of the snails on her spoon, and reducing as she at first believed, the quantity of snails in the bowl.

A dowdy woman of all too familiar aspect came to Aurelia.

"This is your last day to make peace with the yin-yang principle," this woman said. "It is the celestial compensation by which the universe runs. If you stand against it, you will be destroyed. I have here a symbol of it. It is the life-death symbol. It can give you either life or death at the end of this day, depending on your disposition.

"I am not at all disposed to deal with a yo-yo," Aurelia said. "Begone with that damned thing, woman! I tell you that it is out of balance." It was the meanest-looking yo-yo that Aurelia had ever seen. A person could get hurt badly with a thing like that.

"And I say it is in perfect balance," the woman said. "And it isn't a yo-yo."

Aurelia stopped the woman's mouth with a spoonful of Slowpoke Snails. Then she blew cock-crow on her Prince-of-Nysa horn, and she heard Cousin Clotie around the bend blowing his own. All the people sat down for early Ientaculum-breakfast.

There were a lot of Slowpoke Snails still in the bowl. Aurelia went around through the sitting crowds and gave big spoonfuls to each person. "Good," they said. "Very good," others said. "Where did you get them?" some of them asked her. "You just can't get Slowpoke Snails anymore." Aurelia ladled them out to all five thousand persons of her regular entourage and to many irregulars. And the bowl was still half full.

"I will tell the world this," she said. "The tenth helping of Slowpoke Snails is not nearly as good as the first. I have had enough of them, and I believe that the people have." She went and dumped them in the river, and the fish rose to them gratefully. But by then the breakfast was over with, and it was time to be moving again. Aurelia gave the break-up signal, and she gave her final cock-crow homily:

We have an intrinsic claim to light. We have an intrinsic claim to component peace. We have an intrinsic claim to happiness. We have these claims and rights because we are human creatures. We belong to the privileged and magic species, and that gives us right and title to these good things. We can forfeit these rights and titles only by becoming something less than human creatures.

These are not the things that a governor should talk about, I have been told. "A governor should talk about governing." Aw great goitrous goats! No such thing. Who wants to hear talk about governing. The mechanics of governorship are now performed by mechanism-computers. But the ghostly components of governorship will still be called out by such as myself.

Humans are magic creatures, with something very much the matter with them. All

nature cries out with apprehension "There is something the matter with the People." It is true. There is a crippling that had already taken place before any of us came here. This old destruction of part of us does not belong to our original human nature, but now it is part of our second human nature. This makes it harder, but we were not told that it would be easy. We will be able to follow the bright and rational road with the uncrippled part of us that remains. We have the guarantee that there is road enough for our feet and ship enough for any voyage. We are defective, but our defect is not such as will prevent our making our good way to the end.

Ah, I had another analogy rigged up, but it came apart when I was trying to shape it a little better. I will not use it this time, but perhaps another time. I'd better hurry though. According to what everybody tells me of myself, I have only three times left after this one, only three corners of the day left.

There is an obstreperous house in the middle of our road, whether it is a sea-road or a land-road. The name of that house is the "Mystery of Iniquity." Who groaned, dammit, who groaned? Do not make that "oh-what's-eating-that-kid-anyhow" gesture so loudly at me! Oh really, it is not my fault that I have to hang a stilted name on the house. It is the fault of yourselves and the languages of your world that have nothing but stilted words.

We can pass by that house named the "Mystery of Iniquity" and leave it on the road behind us. And then we will see it once more in the road ahead of us, and this will happen again and again. But there is not a multiplication of the mysterious house. There is only one of them. Sometimes we forget what is in the house, and we open the door and look in. We are blasted then, and we are set back on the board a thousand kilometres and a thousand days to a place called "Swampy Junction." And coming out of "Swampy Junction," the road is always twice as hard as it was before.

People are always making excuses for people, which is good. And they over-do it, which is bad. They say that a lot of the stumbling that people do is accidental. Fat-Tailed Fish it is! None of it is accidental. Some of it is done by the people themselves, and some of it is caused by obscene contraptions. There are grubby little machines that scurry around and pass out cards "Accidental Stumbling Arranged Cheap." They will provide it too. And even the mighty will stumble and break their noses, but it will not be accidental.

This is the end of my cock-crow oration for this day. Short minutes ago I heard the cock crow, after a little urging. And now both friends and enemies tell me that it is the last time I will ever hear it crow.

Do I believe that? Do you?

THIRD PRANDIUM

"I have half a kilo of athanatos bark," Herr Boch the dealer in antiques and oddities and ancient artefacts told Aurelia. "And it works."

"How do you know, Herr Boch? Have you tried it?" Aurelia asked him.

"I have not tried it on myself," he confessed, "but that is only because I'm afraid of it. I have it to sell, not to use. But others have tried it, and it works for them."

"Who has tried it?"

"The Prince of Nysa here, for a conspicuous case. He's been using it for many centuries, and he does not age further or die."

"He looks aged to me," Aurelia said. "No offense, Prince, but you looked aged just these last seven days. Did Uncle Silas use it?"

"Uncle Silas? The spaced-out boy? Yes, he started to use it a few decades ago, but he was already pretty well gone when it started. It did keep him from dying normally, but there was an abnormal circumstance."

"Would you recommend it, Prince?" Aurelia asked.

"Not unreservedly, no," the Prince said. "It's just a question of how much tedium you can take. The world is too much with me now-a-days. There was one time when I had a great capacity for tedium, but now I can tolerate it less and less."

"I haven't much tolerance for tedium myself," Aurelia said. "Is it expensive?"

"Very expensive, Aurelia," Herr Boch told her, "but you are the ward of a group of very rich men. They'll give you anything you want."

"But what are the contradictions?" she wanted to know. "What if it is my time to die, and I take some of your bark?"

"If you take it, you will not die. But there would be contradictions, yes. Very painful contradictions. You might wish, after you had taken it, that there was some way out where you could un-take the bark."

"It is all a joke about it being an athanatos bark, a no-dying bark, isn't it, Herr Boch?"

"No. 'Athanatos' is the correct botanical name for the bush."

"But it's still a joke, isn't it?"

"Would you call the thirty thousand dollars an ounce that I get for it a joke?"

"Yes, a grand joke, Herr Boch. If you weren't an antlered man, you wouldn't get half that much for it. You wouldn't even know about it."

Uncle Silas, as a matter of fact, was there right now, standing dimly and smiling vacantly. He had his head on, but he also had a red line running around his neck where it had once parted from him.

"Uncle Silas, would you recommend Herr Boch's athanatos bark?" Aurelia asked.

"No," he said dimly. "I don't believe that I ever used more than an ounce of it anyhow. Or maybe he let me smell the burlap sack that it had been in, not much more. No, it didn't give me life. I had already gone past that."

And yet Uncle Silas was a strong testimonial for the bark. It had kept this last fragment of him from dying, even after his head had been cut off. Uncle Silas was now very vague of outline. Aurelia picked up pebbles and threw them through him. He howled mildly when he saw one pass through him, but he made no noise when he didn't notice them.

"Who killed you, Uncle Silas?" Aurelia asked.

"Nobody. I died, ah, unnaturally, spaced out, and a little bit at a time. But I'm not clear dead yet, so no one killed me."

"Who cut your head off?"

"Oh, Cousin Clootie did that. He understood the case with me, that I was already gone except for just this last shadow. He knew that I was really quite old. I told you the truth that I had been in old wars and engagements. Do you not have, on 'Shining World,' a number of 'World's oldest teen-agers' as we have? I had been spaced out for a long time when Clootie met me. You have heard of people being half dead. I was probably ninety percent dead and decayed. In some cultures somewhere, the cutting-off-of-the-head had something to do with dispatching the 'walking dead' and giving them release. That was the case in the world where Cousin Clootie came from. He believes it is part of his governing to do things that are too distasteful for other persons to do, cutting off the heads of such unfortunates, for instance. He thought he could release me by cutting off my head, and he did release a lot of me. There's less of me here than there was before he did it, and more of me in the pleasant place on the other side. I'm almost all on the other side now. I wonder how I'm doing over there." He dimmed out.

"I notice that you have been seeing and talking to an apparition," the Prince of Nysa said. "Young girls see and hear vividly on the last day of their lives. They sometimes see and hear things that aren't there."

"Oh, is that all it is?" Aurelia asked. "I thought that something was the matter with me."

Crowds of useless people were playing with those damnable yin-yang yo-yo's.

"Oh, stop playing with those cursed things," Aurelia snapped with a mouth full of spite.

"We'll not stop," they said. "And we're not playing. We mean every bit of it."

It's a wonder they didn't get hurt with those things. They were dangerous.

The day was beginning to fragment. Aurelia was into rather sharp discussions with people. They had begun to doubt her. They had stony ears that she talked to in vain.

"Of course I can work magic," she was saying. "I can throw my staff down on the ground and it will turn into a serpent. Or I can strike a rock with it and water will gush forth."

"You don't have any staff," the people jeered at her.

"Oh, I forgot that I didn't have one," she admitted, "but now I have." She had a fine staff in her hand then. If the people had been a little bit better humoured they would have accepted that as a pretty good trick in itself, but they didn't. They still jeered. "Do it, do it, work magic!"

"Why haven't I already done some of those things?" Aurelia asked the hazardous surroundings. "Is this some sort of penny ante world that would be impressed by little tricks like that? Oh, you people grow small in my estimation!"

"Do it!" they called out. "You *can't* do it. Strike that rock with your staff and make the water gush out. And then throw your staff on the ground and make it turn into a serpent."

"You really don't believe that I can do these little kid tricks?" Aurelia asked.

"No, no. Prove it."

"Oh all right," Aurelia said. She struck the rock with her staff and the staff broke in two. "Oh damn," she said. "It must have been cracked already."

In disgust she threw the two pieces of her broken staff on the ground and they turned into two serpents. Then the two serpents began to gush great streams of water out of their mouths.

"Oh damn, damn," Aurelia wailed. "This is one of those days when everything goes wrong." The people jeered at her 'You got it backwards. You got it all mixed up. We knew you couldn't do it.'

Yes, the day had begun to fragmentize. Aurelia realized that Aldous Spencer-Trencher had been correct. She was dying of this-world sickness, whatever the final fever and climax of that sickness should be. She was dying of 'strange world sickness.' That is what the approximately one out of every seven of the young students taking the world government course died of. And those sicknesses did have very strange climaxes, some of them.

She blew the horn for Prandium. And what would the star dish be?

"Not Slowpoke Snails again!" she cried. "Oh, not again!"

"Hearing how much you liked them, and this being the last day of your life, a group of concerned persons has flown in a thousand kilos of them," a sort of spokesman said. "This is half of the Slowpoke Snail harvest in the world every day."

"It was nice of them," Aurelia said. And a little bit later, she gave her prandium homily for what was perhaps the last noontime she would ever see:

Our behavior is influenced at least as much by our future as by our past. A man with a certificate of surety in hand will behave in a different manner from a man who has it not. I have a certificate of surety in my hand even though I die in a strange place. This future ploy is a little bit like throwing a sky-rope upward and beginning to climb it with the assurance that it will not fall back. The process seems unworkable, and yet it works. It is a trick that all sky-climbers use. To select a goal is to receive power and direction from that goal.

Institutions are better than the people who inhabit them. That is why all "enemies of the people" attack institutions first. Crowds are worse than the people who make them up. The things that you commonly say to each other on this are quite opposite, and wrong. People try to hide in crowds, and the worse the people are the more they try to hide. They call hiding in the crowds "community"; they call it "consensus"; they call it "group-involvement." But most often it is only the cowardice of crowds. Really to go forward, you must go alone, or in loose array. To regress you must seek the homogeneity of a crowd.

You think that I am wandering in my words? Maybe, yes. But really I am only speaking without crowd words and without the crutch of crowd-comments. When you say "Everybody is doing it" you mean "Everybody is doing it wrong." You are using a crutch comment. If you cannot talk outside of the stereotyped dishonesties of the crowd consensus, then do not talk at all. There aren't nearly enough silent people in the world. But will not talking at all leave an empty place where that talk might have been? Indeed it will. Grow onions in that empty place then, but do not fill it with crowd chatter. People go to their damnation in crowds or in endless files, holding onto their neighbours' tails. They do not go down that wrong road alone. They go in peer groups driven by peer pressure.

Be high eagles then, even as your father was a high eagle. But may not even the eagles congregate? They may, yes, in the cool of the evening sometimes, after the day's flight is finished with. I know of several high ledges that are real Edens of Joy on the stark cliffs.

"Aurelia is talking in a fog today," Karl Talion remarked, for they had come to Aurelia's crowd from Cousin Clottie's Cavalcade, both to pay their respects to the body of Blaise Genet

and to hear Aurelia again; and then to hear her twice later in the day before she should be extinguished.

"She's not in a fog," Helen Staircase said. "She's in a 'Shining Mist' of the alchemists. She is talking from another viewpoint. I believe that she can fly literally. She does have bird bones, you know, hollow. And she has aerated flesh. Shall we really accept her as human?"

"We will accept her," Karl Talion said, "or we will be robbed of one of our richest fortunes if we do not. Either we accept it that we belong to the 'broad human race,' or we become intolerably narrow ourselves. It is *our* acceptance, not hers, that is in question."

Aurelia called: Be quiet over there, friends of mine. There will be time enough for you to talk after I am dead. Listen to me now, and the sense of what I say may come to you later.

I will talk for a very little while longer about things in the shade. And then, for the final two corners of this day, I will talk again of things in the sunlight.

I came and tried to touch you. But I have electric skin, and you have skins of another sort, and we couldn't touch. I tried to talk to you, but I used words one way and you use them another, and we cannot understand each other very well. But I came here because I was sent. You also must go when you are sent, and don't quibble about it.

Did you ever notice how the shadows are when it's exactly noontime? They're panoramic. And the air is in abeyance. The ears of you people are like this, but your eyes are open, and I think that you see.

Oh, Aurelia was still clear enough, but it was a scanning and dancing sort of clearness that she had. It didn't touch all the keys.

THIRD MERENDA

They had passed from the river to the lower lake now. All the boats had made it down. They had watched the River Boat and found the locks that weren't generally known.

"Aurelia, if things had been a little bit different, then might we not possibly have—" young Marco Rixthaler tried to ask something.

"Possibly, Marco, possibly," Aurelia said. "If you hadn't been so bashful, something might have come from our meeting. About the possible chromosome differences, I was joking. About the other objections, I was joking too. But you aren't ready for me, and I didn't meet anyone else.

"I really wanted to leave a child of mine on this world. That would prove that I was more than an erratic bolide. As late as last night it could still have been done. We could have lit it last night, and it would have been far enough along by tonight. Then I could have arranged for someone to take it from my body and put it in the body of another girl. It would have been born on this world then, which would make me a real partaker of this world. But it's too late now. It needs a few hours after it is lit before it can be found, and there aren't that many hours left to me. The next time you meet a star-girl, don't be so bashful. Say what you want to say. Of course it probably wouldn't have worked anyhow."

Aurelia and Marco had gone onto the River Boat in a slack time that afternoon. Aurelia had wondered about the international personages. They were always in the gambling room on the River Boat, and yet they were often other places as well. And they were in the gambling room now, Karl Talion, Julio Cordovan, Blaise Genet, Helen Staircase, Michael Strogoff, and Aurelia herself. And they were playing 'brag,' except Michael who was playing solitaire with blank cards and with one Aurelia-value card.

Well, they were wax figures, wax over some sort of jointed armatures, and they moved very mechanically. That Blaise Genet himself was dead did not seem to matter to his wax image. That Julio Cordovan was now the Marshal-Julio the bodyguard didn't seem to matter. Nor did Aurelia-present-in-the-flesh seem to matter to the wax Aurelia.

Aurelia scraped a little wax off the hand of Karl Talion, and he shuddered at the pain of it and bled blood-like fluid.

"Do not injure the wax figures," an attendant said. "It is believed that if you injure them, their primaries will receive the same injury. Oh, it is Aurelia! We are honoured. We have made your image as well as we could, but it doesn't do justice to you."

There was a memory that these persons, on first encounter, had looked waxy and smelled waxy. Well, had they been wax figures when they had played 'brag' for blood, and when they had drunk blood?"

"How do you tell whether they are themselves or their replicas?" Aurelia asked.

"There is no sure way," the attendant said. "Sometimes they are mixed. At present, I believe that one of them is real and the other five are replicas. I had believed that, the very first night of your landing, it was a wax figure of yourself who was here playing with us. Was it?"

"I don't know," Aurelia said. "I thought it was myself. But now I remember that I smelled waxy then and didn't seem to be quite myself."

Aurelia and Marco left the River Boat and came onto shore again.

"Aurelia, is something wrong?" Marco asked. "Do you feel bad?"

"No. I feel all right, but I'm terminal. My fever is rising dangerously, but it's all outside of my body. See! A lot of my fever is in those groups over there. Do you see their horns?"

"No."

Time and events would be telescoped now. The horned people, whenever they appear, are very disruptive of time and events. Disruptive of time especially; but the day had already begun to disintegrate when the horned people appeared.

The people hadn't visible horns, except corner-of-the-eye visible when you weren't quite looking at them. They were the ordinary people of the Cavalcade, people from the countryside and the towns and cities. They were the ordinary people gone ornery as they had gone when they had howled "Jump, Jump!" when Aurelia had been on the high tower and they wanted her to jump to her death, not knowing that she had bird bones and that a height like that was nothing to her.

Rams' horns, goats' horns, bulls' horns, buffalo horns', and all of them were unnaturally sharp. But were they unnatural? What is the nature of horns anyhow, and what is their function?

Their function is to kill.

"Why have you written such an account," the wife of the forensic reporter George Clavicle asked him. "No such thing has happened. She hasn't gone from us."

"She will be gone soon, Lola, just as I have written it here. There's no harm in writing up a piece ahead of time, if it doesn't contradict the facts. And I just can't face up to watching it."

"How did you know about the double dart, George?"

"A hunch, one strong enough to go with. A hunch that may be correct in very bloody detail."

The forensic reporter filed the story before the events happened, but he would be the first one out with it in the night edition.

"Aurelia has been trying to give us a speak-out on the pursuit of happiness," Karl Talion said, "but we're not getting it. Can it be that we have uncircumcised ears? I've already informed my country that there's nothing in it for us in Aurelia. 'A light breeze, a smell of sunshine, no more,' is the report I made."

"Why is there confusion about where Aurelia came from, *and where she is now*?" Helen Staircase asked. "Well porcupines! (One of her phrases.) *This* is where she is now. What is the matter with things?"

"It raised an identity question that we didn't want raised," Karl said. "Blaise Genet believed that Aurelia had travelled only a very short distance, three hundred million to three hundred and sixty million kilometres. He believed that she travelled only from 'bright companion' to 'dark companion' on opposite sides of the same sun. Blaise may possibly know for sure whether this is true now, since another thing that he believed in (and I half believe in it also) is that we receive particular knowledge immediately after death."

"Where would that leave Cousin Clotie then?" Helen wanted to know.

"It would leave him landing on the same world he took off from, and not knowing it. It would make him a fit counterpart for Aurelia, as far as navigational proficiency goes."

"Well, do you believe that?"

"No. It's nonsense. In my country, we've had a fix on 'Shining World' and identified it without any doubt. It isn't distant at all, but it's about one hundred and sixty-five thousand times as distant as Blaise believed it was. It was all that knocking in his head that gave Blaise those funny ideas."

Aurelia blew her horn for merenda-meal very early, while there was still quite a bit of afternoon left. "I don't want to be rushed at the end of it," she said. "There are some things that simply should not be rushed." And then she blew her on-the-way-again notes and gave her penultimate homily before the folks had hardly had time to eat. It was a ragged homily that she gave, but it was all real Aurelia material:

Persons have been choosy about the laws they will accept. They may reject a civil law and accept a physical law (a law of motion, or of gas pressure.) The only explanation for this is that the civil law might have been badly thought out and badly composed. The thing then is to think them better and compose them better. How are laws made and amended on this world anyhow? I've neglected to find out.

The one sort of laws should be inexorable and at the same time as reasonable as the other. To protest against one sort of law should be as foolish as to protest against another. There is a unified theory covering all sorts of laws, for all true laws are interlinked. We should never ask of a law of any sort whether it is good or bad. We should ask whether it is true or false. And the breaking of a physical law or a civil law should have comparable consequences, probably some sort of collision.

There aren't any things that are beyond or above the law, not any things that are too casual or too flitting to be included under the law. Can you name a thing that obeys as many laws as does a sunbeam? And yet a beam is thought of as somehow random. A waterfall obeys a most complex network of laws, all sorts of resolutions of forces, and potentials and momentums and angular velocities, and vapour point and dew point, and multi-surface tension, and the whole catalog of Properties-of-liquids and resonance. If it breaks even one corollary of one law, not only does it come apart, but the whole world comes apart a little bit also. So is it with any broken law.

Physical and moral and civil laws are all mere aspects of the universal Law of Happiness. There was one law given at the physical beginning of the universe, at the "big-bang" moment—the Law "Be Happy!" And the universe has been following that law ever since then, with a few local exceptions. Pure matter obeys this law. Atoms and galaxies obey this law. Pure spirits obey this law. Then why doesn't the local cantankerous mixtures of pure matter and pure spirit obey the law just as unwaveringly? Why don't people obey it always? What's the matter with people anyhow?

You are not driven into a corner by this law. You are driven out of corner after corner by it. And when there are no more corners for you to hide in, then you must obey the happiness law. But will you do it even then?

There is no way that I myself can be hurt. I am beyond that. I can be killed, but I cannot be hurt. I have a "Home Free" certificate. And how does one get such a thing? One reaches out the hand, and it is given. If you don't have such a "Home Free" entitlement, it is only because you didn't hold out your hand for it. There is an old saying "Obey the Law and Do as You Please." There is another old saying "The Law is the Lantern to Light People Home." Notice sometime what kind of people they are who contradict these old sayings. Oh notice them! And help them if you can.

People of my governorship, if I were to give you hard sayings you would try to figure them out and perhaps fulfil them. Because I give you easy sayings, which happen at the same time to be true, you say "There is something wrong with that. It cannot be that easy. Give us something hard."

People, see that scarp of all-sized rocks there that have tumbled down that cliff. Select rocks there and bite on them if you want something hard. But take my sayings because they are true and they are easy.

What, is there a charnel house somewhere along this lower lake? Or is it only the spirit of a charnel house that salutes us here?

THIRD CENA

The people who occupied themselves in manipulating those damnable, double-dart yin-yang, yo-yo's had now painted pictures on each of them with the 'worm with the pistol.' This might have been consonant with the rumour and incipient legend that Aurelia could only be killed by a worm with a pistol. If that is what it took, then they'd do it that way.

Those double-dart yo-yo's could be sailed with a flick of the hand, and they would go straight to a selected target-tree and embed themselves in it to a ten centimetre depth. They could go into a steel target to half that depth. Then, on the whistled commands of the manipulators, they would spin back out of the targets and would sail over a distance (up to a hundred meters) back to the manipulators' hands. They never missed a selected target, though how they homed in on targets and then back to the hands of the manipulators is a secret known only to the members of the yin-yang lodges. And why were those darts double-spiked? So, they would go back and kill the thrower if he had any reservations about the yin-yang philosophy. There were many mysteries about these murderous toys.

How do 'horned people' kill? The actual killing is never seen by outsiders, but the 'surge to kill' is seen and remembered. The 'horned people' of a coven or cornutus encircle a victim and then they close in. There are horrid screams. Then the 'horned people' draw back again, and the victim is dead in the middle of their old stamped and trampled circle. The weapon is not to be found, and all the 'horned people' are like one single stony-faced person in their refusal to explain. Such, at least, is the way they did it in the movie 'Vengeance of the Horned

People' which had been showing in the little movie room on the River Boat. There was some masterful camera-work in this movie, and some far-out suggestion-technique. The 'horned people' were never actually shown as wearing horns, and yet there was no doubt in the mind of any viewer that they were horned indeed.

How do people of the twin terrorist societies, the 'Kill Aurelia Now League' and the 'Kill Cousin Cloutie Now Group' kill? Oh, they have a whole bloody repertoire.

How do persons of the 'Citizens' Execution League' kill? Horribly, clumsily revoltingly. Such avid amateurs have no business at all in the murder field.

How do persons of the 'Media Extinction Arm' kill? By slow poison mostly. A poisoned dish they may have employed recently is 'Slowpoke Snails.' These have been used especially by persons of the Jimmy Candor Cell of the Extinction Arm.

Who will finally do it? The open outrage stands defiant and simmering. Any of the groups might do it. And so the suspense builds.

"No, no, no," Aurelia contradicts this. "Suspense is one thing that we don't want. Not in my death we don't. There is something so cheesy about suspense."

Why was all this animosity with its urge to kill building up?

"It's their last chance," Aurelia said, "before the inexorable law 'Be Happy' finally takes over and puts an end to their vagrancies."

The Magi had begun to pitch their tents early tonight, before full dark had come on, before the cena-supper had been eaten. One of the new, hundred-room, seven-story tents erected by one of the newly-arrived Magi was named the 'House of Iniquity.' That name was in bad taste, and so was the Magus. A corruption had come onto everything.

Aurelia had gone to Cousin Cloutie's camp for the next to last time, to take farewell from him; she had the intuition that they would not have many words on their final meeting. And after that, Cousin Cloutie talked informally, in his difficult way, to anyone who would listen to him.

"The beautiful, sinful, rational road is not all that easy, not for everyone. The easiness presupposes clarity and sparkling intelligence, and clarity is often in short supply with fallen humanity. We must *look* for clarity. We must cry 'Turn up the Lights!' For clarity won't be found in the dark. And it is darker here than even I am used to.

"I do not have a certificate that says 'Home Free.' I have an unsigned certificate that says 'Home, maybe, against long odds, and through a thousand perils.' I am the governor of hard cases. I am an advocate of the fear-and-trembling people. But I will govern, even with a broken rudder, for as long as I am set to govern here. I will open my eyes, though they be glued shut. You have misunderstood about the governorship here of myself and my fair skip-blood cousin. It isn't a political governorship. The old word 'to steer a ship' is the same as the old word 'to govern.' But the best steering of a ship isn't political steering, and neither is the best governing in a world.

"Sometimes my cousin misses things that are trampled in the mud. It isn't that she is fastidious or prideful; it is just that she doesn't see low or dark things. I pull them out of the mud. There is a division of mission between us. Maybe I cannot see as high as she can. Maybe she cannot see as low as I can. She does things easy. I do them hard. Now she goes out of the door unafraid, and I go out of it afraid. But we both go out of it.

"How does one say to a world that one has enjoyed its companionship, even though the goodbye is rather abrupt?"

Aurelia kissed Cousin Cloutie. Then she kissed Jimmy Candor, the fulgurating reporter. Wait a minute! There was something tricky about that one. Aurelia wore the face of dead Susan Pishcala at the moment of that kiss, and Jimmy Candor reeled back in fear even though he knew that Susan was safely dead and by his own hand. And then Aurelia sluffed the Susan disguise again.

She kissed the dowdy woman who was an advocate of yin-yang. She kissed the Chairman of the Board of Governors of Romp Publications, and more than a hundred other people some of them morally malodorous.

"They were all weaving a garment for me," she said. She went back to her own

encampment, the last time she would go there. She blew the horn for the cena-supper, the fourth corner of the day.

"It's a natural reaction," she said to somebody about her terminal fever outside her body. "The world can't swallow me. It gags me up. I am not killed, you see, however it appears that the thing goes. I die of incommutation sickness, but I'm not killed."

She blew the horn again, but the day-schedule was coming apart. She would talk now, that there was no hurry for the people to finish their meal.

If we are well enough disposed, the passage from life through death to fuller life would be no more noteworthy than the passage from one day to another. This isn't to say that it isn't noteworthy at all; for the passage from one day to another should always be the walking from one delightful mansion to another, a sparkling experience. But in our passing from a smaller room to a larger we commonly pay too much attention to the doorway we are passing through. True, death should have all the excitement of the beginning of a stupendous journey, but our passage point is not a main part of it.

The "Nocastian Nights" Stories, beloved by children and adults forever, are loaded with jewelled magic and multicoloured wonders, with the excitement of strangeness and the allurements of species. Whales that talk, horses that fly if you turn the peg behind the ear, fish that rise from the ocean with gems in their mouths, cities of brass that can be transported from one place to another by the mere saying of a correct rhyme, the prize "happiness forever" won by no more than a little determined swashbuckling, giants that come at the bidding to serve and to sustain, the door in the wall that opens onto an incredibly fair land when one has the right key, palaces under the sea, and the great under-sea City of Domdaniel, castles built of drifting clouds of jacinths and chrysolites, flying carpets that will transport one anywhere, persons of incomparable beauty and pleasantness, companionship where each one takes the heart from his breast and exchanges it for the other, music that makes the mountains break open like doors, the enchantment of *sanctified* flesh, and the ship that sails on the river named "Forever."

By the way, what do you call the "Nocastian Nights" Stories on this world? I know they have them here. Do you have a local name?

Can these things be? Yes, they can. Where and when? Right here and right now. These are the things that happen and exist every day in the real world. And here and now we are at least in the ante-room of the real world. The right key that opens the door in the wall is called on one side of it "Grace" and on the other side of it "Love a-burning." It opens the door even if you use it upside down.

In one hour I will go from one room of this incredibly fair land to a larger room of it.

The best thing about this curious encounter is that we may be able to learn something from it,” Doctor Thorgrimsson spoke the next morning in the publication *Wide Awake*, the *Morning Medical Journal*. “We will have other visitors in time to come, and indeed there is the belief that we have previously entertained several visitors unaware. For this reason, it is important that we examine why these two young creatures have died from their encounter with our world. The deaths were accidental, of course, as are all deaths by chronic allergy. And yet there was multiple purposive death waiting for them if the accidents did not happen.

“This world responded to the children by classifying them anaphylactically as intruders’ and by secreting a murderous toxin against them as ‘intruders.’ The response is so complex as almost to go beyond the province of the medical. This is at the same time a physical, a chemical, a medical, a sociological, and cosmological response-problem. The question is whether a mucous membrane is responsible for its reaction against an alien pollen or irritant.

Yes, as a matter of fact, it should be held responsible. The behaviouristic approach to allergies does make a membrane ashamed of any violent or excessive reaction to an intrusive stimulus, and it is proved that the membrane is able to modify its reaction by membranous resolve and will. And we do have cases of the ‘rag weed’ being shamed out of attacking people with the dreaded ‘hay fever.’

“Considering our world and its dominant human fauna as a responding mucous membrane, it may be possible to teach it to modify its responses to para-human intrusive contact. We must convey this idea, on conscious or unconscious or membranous level, that the murder-response is entirely out of order and will not be tolerated.

“This may be quite a simple adjustment that we have to make. Let us hope that we are able to make it before we are next visited from the sky.”

But Doctor Thorgrimsson’s comments were printed the following morning. Now it is still tonight. Yes, that is an indication of the way the sequence was disintegrating and becoming irrational.

The two cavalcades of Aurelia and Cousin Clootie had merged, and then their mass had shattered into specialized groups making islands among frightened spectators. The violence factor rose exponentially. There were fanged wolves and horned killers bawling and howling and shuffling around, though they were still in human guise. Everyone knew that Cousin Clootie’s death would come first, and yet there was no way that anyone could know anything at all about the matter.

Aurelia blew her Prince-of-Nysa horn, and Cousin Clootie answered with his. But then noisome clouds of creatures and prodigies poured out of both of the horns and near blinded the blowers. These clouds of delirious content would remain through the whole action, giving a surrealist counterpart to all of it. Aurelia and Cousin Clootie were not more than thirty meters apart, and they couldn’t come closer for the crowds. Uncle Silas, in very vague and weightless form, was standing with Cousin Clootie and regarding him with friendship. Cousin Clootie had tried to give Uncle Silas release, not knowing how spaced-out he was or how much of him was then on each side of the barrier.

Nervous bull-frogs were bellowing on the splashy shore of the lower lake, and manipulators of those yin-yang yo-yos were flying them at targets in simulated murder, and then whistling them back again.

“Play with those things somewhere else,” Aurelia said crossly. “They’re atrocious, and they have an evil philosophy behind them.”

“No we won’t,” a player said. “This is the world tournament for manipulating them, and we’re having it here.”

“People shouldn’t be allowed to kill those two little children” a woman said.

“It’s all right,” her husband told her. “It’s what they call an ‘Inexorable Chthonic Movement.’ There’s no way of stopping it. It’s a little bit like killing snakes.”

“I don’t think it’s anything at all like killing snakes.”

“Besides, the children will die by accident. No one will kill them. There are some experts here to observe. They are studying Chthonic-Movement accidents. And most of the things that

those kids said are against everything that we stand for.”

The multi-media ‘with-it’ people were making ballads. Aurelia knew that she was in them, but she couldn’t catch the words. One of her mentors came to her.

“I have a little bit of something to tell you before you die,” he said.

“Oh leave it off, leave it off,” she protested. “I haven’t agreed to any of this business about my dying. I’m as healthy as a colt.”

“Yes, I know,” the mentor said. “Several days ago I told you what world this was, a crystal ball had whispered it to you also.”

“And I hardly believed it,” Aurelia said. “I don’t believe it yet. It just can’t be.”

“No it can’t. I was joking or something worse. So was the crystal ball. Dark jokes they were. But I can’t have you die under a misconception. This isn’t really——world. This is ——world.”

“What? Oh, that un-explains a lot,” Aurelia brightened. “But still it’s as unlikely as before. It gives me a funny feeling to die on a world where nobody ever did take me seriously.”

A lady brought some ailanthus seeds to Aurelia.

“If you set them now, some of them will grow out of your mouth after you are dead and decomposed, and there will be a large ailanthus tree to show where you are,” she said.

“But doesn’t the ailanthus tree smell funny?” Aurelia asked.

“Yes it does. But it’s pretty. It’s the tree that most reminds me of you.”

Aurelia ate the ailanthus seeds.

“I’m going to catch one of those things and kill it,” Aurelia threatened the offensive yoyos.

“You make one of them mad and it’s likely to kill you,” a boy said.

The newly-formed society ‘Kill Cousin Clootie Now and Aurelia in Just a Minute’ was getting ugly. They crowded around Cousin Clootie and harassed him. One of them tore his arm off with a swinging grapple. One of them drilled him right through the chest with a red-hot pike. One of them split his skull with an old-fashioned axe. And they jeered at him and he fell dead at their feet with multiple murder wounds.

Only it didn’t happen quite that way.

Cousin Clootie’s little space ship had a good shielding system, and it was programmed to shield Cousin Clootie in moments of stress. It smashed the swinging grapple before it could touch Cousin Clootie. It sent down a protective shaft and diverted and bent the red-hot pike. And it sent another protective shaft that intercepted the swinging axe and vaporized it. There was no way that it would permit assault on Cousin Clootie.

The newly-formed society withdrew in anger and added words to their slogan-flag ‘And Kill That Damned Space-Ship First.’ And they went to get a small cannon that one of them knew about to shoot it up.

Then the horned people came to the assault. There was a sizeable coven or cornutus of them and they encircled Cousin Clootie. Their horns were invisible to the eyes, but they were sensed by every other sense. The hornies encircled Cousin Clootie and closed in. There were horrid screams that went on for quite a while and then subsided to what sounded like dying gurgles. The ‘horned people’ drew back again then, and the victim Cousin Clootie lay dead in the middle of their old circle. The weapon would not be found, and all the ‘horned people’ would be like one single stony-faced person in their refusal to explain. It was a scene from the movie ‘Vengeance of the Horned People’ all over again.

Only it didn’t happen quite that way either.

Cousin Clootie was still on his feet in the middle of their old circle. He was gurgling in incoherent anger, but it wasn’t a dying gurgle. The ‘horned people’ had cut the hair from one side of his head only. They had pulled one sleeve off his tunic, and the opposite leg off his trousers. They had smeared him with black and scarlet paint, and they were laughing at him with derisive laughter. But they hadn’t killed him. The ‘horned people’ knew about shielding devices, and they knew what liberties they would be permitted to take and what they would not. And they knew that Clootie was really killed already by the spirit they had engendered.

Herr Boch brought his antlers to Aurelia. They had fallen off, so now he would not be an antlered man after all. They were still quite small, about the length of the end joint of a little finger. Aurelia, not knowing how else to keep them, swallowed them.

Then the persons of the 'Citizens' Execution League' moved in on Cousin Clotie. They were the horrible and clumsy amateurs, the revolting creatures. Each of them made a twiddly little speech, and then each of them struck a death blow.

"Sick-Simper Tyrant, Die!" the final one of them cried, and he shot Cousin Clotie with a .45 hand gun and killed him. Then the members of the League all shouted slogans. Oh, those damned slogans!

Only it didn't happen quite that way either.

Cousin Clotie's space ship shielded him as it had done before. It sent down those protective shafts to intercept every blow of every sort. So Cousin Clotie did not fall from any of those assaults, not even from the point-blank shot of the .45 hand gun.

No. He fell five seconds later.

The accident, as well as can be reconstructed, happened like this. One of those zinging yin-yang yo-yos struck the bottom of one of those protective shafts as it was being retracted into Cousin Clotie's space ship again. And it was deflected downward, and it skewered itself into Cousin Clotie's chest.

"Oh, this is ridiculous," Aurelia said. "It is grotesque." And she ran to Cousin Clotie. The yin-yang yo-yos had all been safety-approved, of course, "—so that they might not be damagingly deflected by any earthly material to do damage to any earthly person." Yes, but that protective shaft that the yo-yo had hit was not of any earthly material, and Cousin Clotie was not an earthly person.

"How bad is it, Cousin Clotie?" Aurelia asked as she bent over him. She shivered as she saw the painting on the double-dart, the worm with the gun. Somewhere there was a prophecy about herself and a worm with a gun. The skewering yo-yo dart was the worm with the gun.

"Don't anybody whistle!" the stentorian voice of the bodyguard Marshal-Julio rang over the multitude. But it rang a moment too late. The manipulator of the fateful double-dart, seeing that it was involved in a controversy, whistled for it to withdraw from its accidental target and return to his hand. But Aurelia, bending low over Cousin Clotie, was in the way of its withdrawal, and in the way of the protective shafts from both the space ships. The dart tried to withdraw. And it skewered out of the chest of Cousin Clotie and into the breast of Aurelia. Then the yo-yo dart panicked or got mad, and killed them both.

"Oh this is silly!" Aurelia said in her last words.

"Clumsy," Cousin Clotie said as he died. "Is there no sense of drama on this world? Bad show. Ridiculous."

The ballad-makers of the multi-media 'with-it' group had been singing the new song 'She was a Bolide,' with horn accompaniment.

Helen Staircase came there and killed the bodyguard Marshal-Julio by splitting him open with a powerful knife. Three days before, she had drawn low card to kill him. She still didn't believe that he was Julio Cordovan, but she was exploring inside him with strong hands to see whether she could find anything of Julio in there.

Now all the people seemed to wake up at the same time and they all said, "What strange daze have we been in anyhow? Well, no matter, we are not in it any longer. That little dead girl seems to have something to do with our daze, and that little dead boy also. Oh, it's been a silly week!"

See! Hear! The ballad-makers were already making a song about it, "Silly week." Listen to the way the horns come in on it, Oh clumsy, clumsy, cool, cool!

Cousin Clotie's little space ship dipped down and picked him up and carried him off. But Aurelia had forgotten to program her ship for retrieval.

They buried her there without a grave-stone. Her only monument was certain unfading words on water *Preserve her Name. Her Name is Aurelia*. But hardly once a year would a fisherman in a row-boat come onto those words, and then he would wonder "How do they get an effect like that? It must be a 'Monumental Water Company' product."

After Aurelia had been dead for a year, an ailanthus tree did grow there. It did smell funny, but it was pretty. It was the tree that should have most reminded people of Aurelia, but there was no memory of her left to be revived. A set of branched antlers also grew out of the

ground there, and people do stop to look at them.

On the morning after the fateful night, a couple of media persons had been talking. "Something new every week," one of them said. "Something a little different every week. Well, what kind of pure nuttiness will this new week have?"

"Want to guess?" the other one asked. "We're getting up a pot on it. Nearest guess wins it all."

If you've enjoyed this book and would like to read more great SF, you'll find literally thousands of classic Science Fiction & Fantasy titles through the SF Gateway.

For the new home of Science Fiction & Fantasy ...

For the most comprehensive collection of classic SF on the internet ...

Visit the SF Gateway.

www.sfgateway.com

Also by R. A. Lafferty

The Devil is Dead

Archipelago (1979)
The Devil is Dead (1971)
More than Melchisedech (1992)

Other Novels

Past Master (1968)
The Reefs of Earth (1968)
Space Chantey (1968)
Fourth Mansions (1969)
Arrive at Easterwine: The Autobiography of Ktistec Machine (1971)
Not to Mention Camels (1976)
Aurelia (1982)
Annals of Klepsis (1983)
Serpent's Egg (1987)
East of Laughter (1988)
How Many Miles to Babylon? (1989)
The Elliptical Grave (1989)
Dotty (1990)

The Flame is Green (1971)
Okla Hannali (1972)
Half a Sky (1984)

Collections

Nine Hundred Grandmothers (1970)
Strange Doings (1972)
Does Anyone Else Have Something Further to Add? (1974)
Funnyfingers & Cabrito (1976)
Apocalypses (1977)
Golden Gate and Other Stories (1982)
Through Elegant Eyes (1983)
Ringing Changes (1984)
The Early Lafferty (1988)
The Back Door of History (1988)
Strange Skies (1988)
The Early Lafferty II (1990)
Episodes of the Argo (1990)
Lafferty in Orbit (1991)
Mischief Malicious (And Murder Most Strange) (1991)
Iron Tears (1992)
The Man Who Made Models – The Collected Short Fiction Volume 1 (2014)
The Man With the Aura – The Collected Short Fiction Volume 2 (2015)

R. A. Lafferty (1914-2002)

Raphael Aloysius Lafferty was an American science fiction and fantasy writer born in Neola, Iowa. His first publication of genre interest was "Day of the Glacier" with *Science Fiction Stories* in January 1960, although he continued to work in the electrical business until retiring to write full-time in 1970. Over the course of his writing career, Lafferty wrote thirty-two novels and more than two hundred short stories and he was known for his original use of language, metaphor and narrative structure.

Copyright

A Gollancz eBook

Copyright © R. A. Lafferty 1982
All rights reserved.

The right of R. A. Lafferty to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

This eBook first published in Great Britain in 2016 by Gollancz
The Orion Publishing Group Ltd
Carmelite House
50 Victoria Embankment
London, EC4Y 0DZ
An Hachette UK Company

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978 1 473 21358 6

All characters and events in this publication are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of the publisher, nor to be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published without a similar condition, including this condition, being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.orionbooks.co.uk